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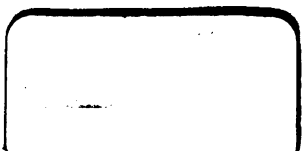
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BERLIN SOCIETY

BY

COUNT PAUL VASILI

Translated from the French by

J. LODER

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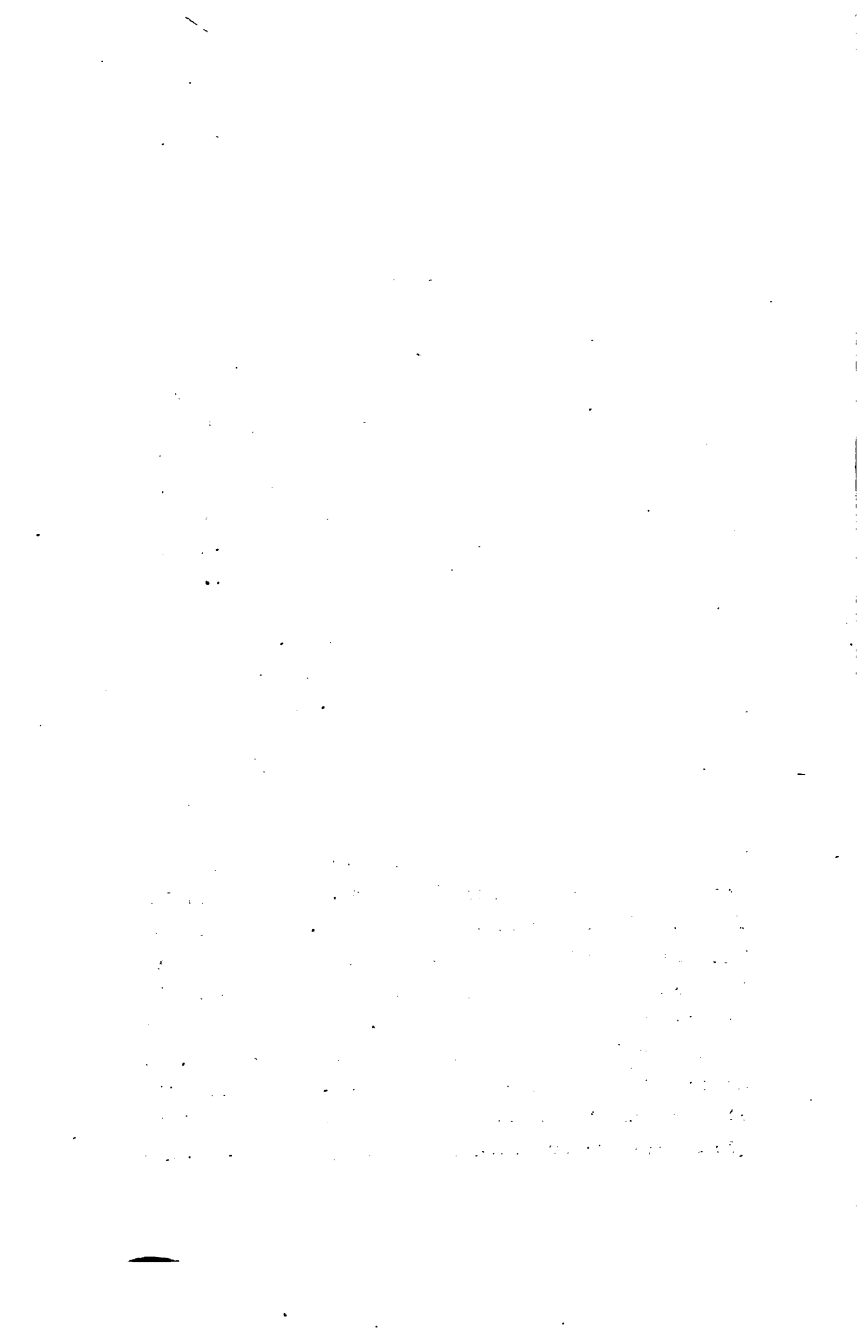
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BERLIN SOCIETY.

MY YOUNG FRIEND :

I have received your letter of the 18th of this month, by which you apprise me of your entrance into the diplomatic service, as well as of your nomination as *attaché* at Berlin. The first news has delighted me, and I congratulate you on it with all my heart; the second has given me no pleasure. Berlin is not an agreeable post at which to make one's *début*. There are there too many serious political interests at stake, and not enough amusements for a young man of your age who arrives there unknown. The society there is not very hospitable for strangers: the men in position are very reserved; the women prudish or dissolute; the young men, for the most part, hard cases. They dance there a good deal, which would please you but moderately; and they don't converse there at all, which would please you still less. Berlin is essentially a little city. They gossip

and slander there more than anywhere else ; besides, there is a quantity of intrigues. The society has an excessively backbiting tongue, and is continually on the lookout for some scandal ; it has no reading, little education, and not the least interest outside of what concerns it immediately.

One should know the society of Berlin very well not to get lost in it, or rather one should know well all the different phases of society in Berlin for the stay there to become interesting and profitable. I fear that you would have neither the time nor the opportunity to study the character of the people with whom you are going to live.

You say that you regret arriving at Berlin at the moment when I quit it to return no more, and you ask me to aid you in your *début* by tracing for you some sketches of persons whom you will have occasion to meet. I do not see anything improper in that ; but it is on the condition that you are absolutely discreet. I will write only for *you*, for your personal and special instruction. I say instruction, not conviction : my fashion of judging, of observing, of concluding, ought not in any way to influence you. You know that I am a man very susceptible to prejudices and antipathies. It may be that I am never just ; it is for

you to discern when I am true, when I am false. A double work upon the observations and upon the observer will be profitable for you.

Do not ask of me any logical sequence in my letters. I will make them as they please me, when they please me. You know my horror of categories and classifications. According as I may have one, two, or three interesting ones, I will send them to you. Do not rely upon any fixed dates. The chase, my taste for strolling (a long time crossed), will make me more than once neglect my promise to write for you my recollections of Berlin. You will attach so much the more value to my letters, I hope, as they will always be to you a surprise from what was anticipated.

THE ROYAL FAMILY.

FIRST LETTER.

THE Emperor William is, without contradiction, the most popular prince among his people in our time. Apart from his military successes, he is a man very amiable, very benevolent in appearance, very paternal in his kindness. Without being of remarkable intelligence, he has quick perceptions, and possesses the talent of discovering people capable of becoming useful to him, of pushing them forward and supporting them in the face of all opposition. He has no vanity, disappears when it becomes necessary, effaces himself behind his Chancellor, and whatever he may suffer from the latter's imperious will, he has too much dignity to allow the world to perceive it.

He is ambitious, but coarsely so, from a feeling of covetousness for his neighbor's goods; he has the same appetite morally as physically; he wants always more than he already possesses, and even to this day cannot console himself for not having taken Saxony in 1866. He is absolute in his

principles, in his will ; has his favorites, but never permits them to occupy themselves with politics, reserving that exclusively for his ministers. The Emperor William believes in the inefficiency of his son, and makes a point of it that all Germany should think as he does.

He joins to great perseverance an immense egotism. He occupies himself with government more than is generally believed. The moment it becomes a question personal to himself, then he obstinately persists in the triumph of his ideas ; but otherwise he defers to others. The army has in him a solid defender, and it is the only thing in which he has not allowed Prince de Bismarck to be mixed up. He never approved the conduct of the Prince Royal during his short regency in 1878.

The treaty of Berlin displeased him ; he would have wished a smaller Bulgaria, and was indignant at the emancipation of the Jews in Roumania. These two points were very displeasing to him, according to what one day he assured one of my friends in a moment of frankness. Is it perhaps spite at not having been consulted in so grave a matter that governs him ? Is it perhaps really his political conviction which urges him to deplore

these two points? He has had especially in his life a great deal of happiness ; a happiness which he knows, moreover, how to appreciate. In public he never speaks of politics, but he is essentially a man of the world. His politeness, although extreme, is not affected. He knows what he owes to others, and does not ignore gratitude ; but, on the other hand, he never permits any one to forget that it is his name which has covered everything that was done. On the whole, he is genuinely kind, really frank, moderately intelligent, somewhat narrow-minded, of well-developed good sense, and of an excellent heart. He is a personage who could inspire only the sympathy and respect of his people, and who will have his place among the great sovereigns without ever having been a great man.

The Empress Augusta has a certain naturalness of mind—she thinks she has more than is really the case. She is a person who has had ardent friends, passionate admirers, and bitter detractors. Those who have attributed to her a great intelligence were in the wrong ; those who have called her spiteful and malicious were equally so. She has not an unbounded intelligence ; she is not bad : but she is intriguing, false, affected. ?

She insists absolutely upon playing a *rôle*, gives herself infinite trouble to make people believe that she is learned, literary, versed in everything that passes in the world of science and art, and also, in fine, to render herself popular. But she has no dignity, no sense of discretion: she confides her secrets to her *femme de chambre*, Mlle. de Neundorff, and the latter gives herself up, in common with many ladies of the highest class, to all sorts of little intrigues, at the head of which is the Empress. She surrounds herself with courtiers and favorites, who are the first to speak ill of their protectress. A good woman at the bottom, very charitable, but ridiculous by her efforts to appear remarkable. Her heart is excellent, her kindness inexhaustible, but she does not know the art of giving, and has the faculty of taking away from her favors all their value. Tiresome by reason of her amiability, she always obtains the contrary of what she desires. Little loved in general, she has never been appreciated. They believe neither in her philanthropy nor her charity, nor in any of the qualities which she really possesses. She tires everybody, from the Emperor down to her domestics. An unhappy creature, but unhappy principally through her own fault. When she

disappears, they will utter a sigh of relief,—but they will regret her later.

The Prince Royal has not been, up to the present time, a man of action: he is father of a family in the fullest sense of the term. He seems to live only for his wife, and adores his children, with the exception of his eldest son, whose daring spirit he fears. It is frequently repeated at Court that his political ideas belong to the realm of dreams. His passionate admiration for the Princess has made him completely English in heart. For the last twenty-five years he has lived in the situation of a prince who might reign from one day to another, and becomes irritated at the false and subordinate position in which he is held. The Emperor and M. de Bismarck consider him as an utopian. He loves the arts, encourages letters, and I should not be astonished if his ideal were the character of Augustus; he protects the little Virgils, who even united, we confess, are not worth as much as the great. When he mounts the throne he will pursue quite a different policy from that of his father. Those, therefore, who detest the latter's policy at home or abroad put their hope in the former. Are they deceived? Will the Prince ever know how to

come to a decision, or at least take it in time? His manners are cold ; in spite of his graciousness one does not feel at ease with him. He has familiarity rather than kindness. His heart is really good, but his detractors claim that he will not succeed in conquering a greater position as sovereign than he has been able to do as heir to the throne. He has no ambition but a legitimate desire to reign. He never forgets an injury, notwithstanding his kindness, which is infinite. Under his reign Germany will have peace ; and the greatest happiness that could happen to France would be that this reign should be prolonged. He is not popular with the army. He is discussed not as ordinary but as political intelligence in society even by those who approach him the nearest. They have told some unfavorable stories about him. His father fears him and tries to efface him as much as possible ; his son maintains his rights. In the country they entertain a very high idea of the Prince Royal, but in his own family a very small one.

The Princess Royal is a woman of universal attainments. She writes political memoirs, keeps up a correspondence with philosophers, is a sculptress, a painter, composes sonnets, makes archi-

tectural plans, etc. She has a great deal of natural intelligence, but an education so extended that at certain moments it seems that the superabundance of her ideas is detrimental to their arrangement. Her strength has sometimes the result of obscuring the clearness of the ideas which she seizes and the opinions she professes.

She does not rack her mind for the occasion; its riches are so numerous that she is constrained to withhold them, and speaks, somewhat as Rochefoucauld wrote, by maxims.

Society must be distasteful to her. She does not like it; without doubt she despises it, for one meets at her *soirées* people not to be met with elsewhere, and who mingle in society only at her house. She does nothing to merit the title of "woman of the world," but, on the other hand, she has the feeling—one might say the pride—of her superiority as Princess. She seems to disdain the fidelity of social relations. A mere nothing detaches or irritates her; while if it is a question of sustaining an idea, she will display a resolute persistency destined to triumph over all obstacles.

She occupies herself with politics, and she has upon this subject her private opinions, which are

not always those entertained in her immediate surroundings. Thus, under the pretext of satisfying her artistic tastes, she often goes to Italy, so as not to be obliged to approve what she condemns, or to yield a point which she defends.

She is sincerely and boldly liberal, and this is one of the grave reproaches addressed to her.

Her relations with the Empress are very strained; they are less so with the Emperor. She exerts over her husband, by affection and by skill, an influence without limit.

The Prince William, her eldest son, is but twenty-four years of age. It is, then, difficult to say as yet what he will become; but what is incontestable at this moment is that he is a young man of promise, of mind, of head and heart. He is the most intelligent among the princes of the royal family. With that, brave, enterprising, ambitious, hot-headed, but a heart of gold, sympathetic to the highest degree, impulsive, spirited, vivacious in character, and having a gift of repartee in conversation which would almost make one believe that he was not a German. He adores the army, by which he is loved in return. He has known how, in spite of his extreme youth, to make himself popular in all classes of society, is

highly educated, is well read, forms projects for the prosperity of his country, and possesses a remarkable perception for everything touching upon politics. He will be certainly a distinguished man, and very probably a great sovereign. Prussia will find perhaps in him a second Frederick II., but without his scepticism. In addition to this, he possesses a fund of gayety and good-humor which will attenuate the little hardnesses which, as a true Hohenzollern, he has in his character. He will be essentially a personal king, will not allow himself to be led, will have a sound and straightforward judgment, prompt decision, energy in action, and firm will. When he attains the throne he will continue the work of his grandfather, and will certainly undo that of his father, whatever it may be. In him the enemies of Germany will have a formidable adversary: he may become the Henry IV. of his country. His greatest fault consists in a too decided *penchant* for women. He has mistresses by the quantity, and he might stumble one day upon a favorite who would know how to govern him. His wife is of too little consequence to exercise over his impetuous nature the least empire; he already neglects her, and will soon abandon her entirely, for she has no

charm capable of attracting or retaining him. It is not probable that he will ever be caught in the net of a person destitute of intelligence ; and as to what concerns his present *liaisons*, they are not yet of consequence. As long as he continues, as he has done up to the present, to satisfy his passions in the lower classes of society, the thing will remain without danger ; but if his attention were one day aroused by a woman of the world, then it would be necessary to follow his actions with great care, and one could then judge him definitely only by this vulnerable point.

THE PARLIAMENT.

SECOND LETTER.

ONE of the recent articles of the *Gazette de l'Allemagne du Nord*, on the subject of the last note of the Cardinal Jacobini, has, so to say, much excited the Ultramontane journals, the *Germania* among others, which paper has replied to it by another boldly aggressive article. This aggression, for which the Prince de Bismarck was certainly well prepared, and which perhaps even accorded with his wishes, will probably end, for the present, negotiations with Rome, which, while not being broken off, will remain in suspense until it pleases the Chancellor to cast them again as bait to the deputies of the Centre party, in order to obtain from it a vote of some sort of which he will have need. It is a curious thing to observe the adroit way in which the Prince de Bismarck manages in the midst of all the perils of parliamentary life in Germany ; and one might almost believe that he has concluded a secret compact with the devil, to see the way in which he triumphs over every ob-

stacle, surmounts all hatreds, and succeeds always in making people say Yes who were, apparently, firmly decided to say No. These constant successes are explained in part by the extraordinary capacity of the Chancellor; but their primary cause and the reason for their existence are due to the want of adhesion of the parties, and to the total absence of patriotism which distinguishes the Parliament of the Empire of Germany.

In fact, if we examine the different factions which compose this Parliament, if we study their desires and aspirations, we will not fail to be convinced that none of them comprehend the true signification of the word "*patrie*," and that it is for this reason that they are led, dominated, overwhelmed by the great figure of the Chancellor, who is perhaps the only man in Prussia capable of thoroughly appreciating the power of his work, and who is so well identified with it that on the day when he disappears he will drag it with him into his tomb.

Of the three great parties which divide the Reichstag—the Conservative, the National Liberals, and the Centre—the first is powerless by the complete dependence in which the government holds it, the second is discredited, as are all those

who do not know how to profit from their success of the moment, and the third is badly directed by a chief blinded by a secret and unavowed ambition. None of the three, as I will try to show, has energy enough to maintain its ground against any one whatever, and least of all against Prince de Bismarck.

The Conservatives comprise principally great Protestant or Catholic seigneurs, who, well understanding that they could not, by reason of their position, ally themselves to liberalism, have deemed it to their personal advantage to abdicate all initiative, all personal opinion, and to vote with the Chancellor always, or almost always, save a protest when it becomes a question of reassuring the conscience of their electors. It is a party composed at the same time of honest but weak individuals, of people without profession or conscience, of ambitious persons without means, and finally of frank imbeciles desirous of becoming something at any price. The government vaunts itself before the public of having it for an ally, and distributes to it from time to time some decorations in order to make of it an accomplice. It is the *cortège* of honor which accompanies the decisions of M. de Bismarck, which the Prince flat-

ters, caresses, and praises, either in mass or individually. The majority of the Conservatives are elected by virtue of the local influence which each presumptive or absolute proprietor of important lands possesses. Their candidacy is sustained by the government, which sees in them a docile instrument, and which, moreover, holds them almost all between its hands. The nobility has so degenerated in Prussia, it is so poor and has so often desired to enrich itself in indefensible ways, that it finds itself forced by the stress of circumstances to lean upon the State and cover itself with its powerful protection as with a mantle. Strousberg, "the railway king," as he was called in Berlin, has upon his conscience parliamentary votes wrested by necessity (represented in the guise of M. de Bismarck) from his victims. The Prince, who despises humanity enough to have said that every conscience could be bought provided that a sufficient price was offered, has with extreme ability known how to fish out of the troubled waters, where they were drowning, many Serene Highnesses, of whom he has made lost souls by saving them from shame or ruin, while giving up their spoils to the Jew bankers, his friends of the left hand. The mali-

cious tongues pretend (though we have no proof) that he has lately conquered a minister more docile than any other, who has to execute all his behests, suffer all his ill-humors, even receive on occasion his kicks, and who dares neither to protest against this bad treatment nor allow himself the slightest scruple of conscience, for he knows that he would immediately be delivered up, bound hand and foot, to the hangman of M. de Bismarck, to whom he owes large sums of money, they say, and who favors him only out of regard for the Chancellor, and at his order.

The situation of this minister, I am told, is also that of many others more noble and more illustrious than himself—such, for example, as certain dukes whose property rights would have been sequestered but for the intervention of the Crown. All of them now pay their debts while sitting in the Reichstag, where they are overwhelmed with honors.

These are only a few examples taken from a thousand among the Conservatives, but which suffice to show their humiliating weakness. Other members of the party, hypocritically ambitious, sustain the government in order to become ministers. Such are the Count Udo Stolberg and the

Prince of Hatzfeldt-Trachenberg, cousin of Count Paul. The first of these two personages is incontestably a man of intelligence, but, in spite of that, destitute of political judgment and soured by his position of younger brother; the second, a rich proprietor of Silesia, is pressed forward by his wife, in whose veins runs the blood of a princely family of Gotha, and who has all its ambitions. She is the motive power which makes him advance, for such is the weakness and insufficiency of this "solid Conservative party" that it must absolutely be set a-going by love, fear, ambition, or interest: a pitiful image of an aristocracy which is dying, passing away, and which, being unable to be any longer anything by itself, wishes to sustain itself by the aid of a power and a glory of which it is jealous, which it hates, against which it conspires sometimes and murmurs always, but with which it cannot dispense, and which, moreover, it obeys blindly because it fears it.

The National Liberals, indeed, have a programme; but this programme is vague, indefinite as their name. They were formerly solid friends of the Chancellor. Who has not been of his friends in Prussia? They sustained him in his projects against Rome and in many others, but

they committed the error of believing that they had become indispensable to him. This error was a capital one. There are no indispensable people for M. de Bismarck: there are useful people at the most, and that's all. This man promises always, but never keeps his promises. How many persons who formerly swore by him only have now become his mortal enemies! Such are Messieurs Lasker and Bennigsen, both men of remarkable intelligence, but who annoyed him, and of whom he succeeded in disembarassing himself. These gentlemen believed for a moment that they had attained power. They even did touch it with the end of their fingers. Unfortunately, between touching and holding there is an abyss. Moreover, the Nationals do not deserve much sympathy. They are not frankly liberal, although on certain sides they touch upon socialism, they are not monarchists: they think only of their own interests, being above anything else men of the Bourse; they are passionately in favor of the unity of Germany, but only so far as it is personally profitable to them; they attack the principle of property, but defend their own; they cry out against the aristocrats, but do not disdain a noble title; in a word, they

are Conservatives for that which belongs to them, but of a profound and egotistical inconsistency. They everywhere constituted a powerful party some years ago ; now they have lost their former power, first because the Chancellor has turned against them, then because the country has begun to regard them with suspicion, and finally because their principal chiefs have resigned their functions, either out of disgust or from weariness, or because the mirage of some future utility has been made to dazzle their eyes, as was lately the case with M. Bennigsen ; for he has been suspected of having received from the Chancellor *le mot d'ordre* for such an inexplicable retreat.

Soon the National Liberals, who have already lost much ground at the last election, will no longer form anything but an insignificant fraction in the Chamber. Though they have among them people of undoubted talent, gifted with a genuine political sense, and of a lofty intelligence, yet they did not know how to make use of all these qualities. Their hour came in its turn, but they did not perceive it, and it was utilized and turned to profit by M. de Bismarck. Now their *rôle* is ended, their power finished. They are no longer numerous enough to constitute a majority, and

they confine themselves to making an active opposition to the Chancellor, to annoying him by recalling to him the past. Save that, their influence is nothing. One likes to hear them speak on account of their eloquence ; but their voice, which often points out truths to the nation, is no longer listened to. What has perhaps also injured them is their slightly idealistic tendencies ; they have had some social dreams. Now the German admits only poetic dreams. He admits that one could have thirst for the ideal as Werther ; but one ought to think of the people, of the workman, him who suffers and works, and who, according to the theories of the men who govern Prussia at present, ought not to be anything but a soldier.

The party of the Centre, or Catholic is, without contradiction, the most powerful in the Chamber. However, it could not any longer constitute itself alone a majority ; but it is the party the most united, the most compact, and—the most foolish sometimes. It has no political significance ; it is essentially personal ; its opposition is nothing but obstinacy ; its eloquence even is only the eloquence of the preacher—which would be more in its place if it were launched from the height of a

Christian pulpit than from a parliamentary tribune. It encloses within its bosom people of much intelligence, but who either put this intelligence to the profit of their individual interests or guide it in a false direction, that of a triumph. Its chief, M. de Windthorst, has not been one of the ministers of the King of Hanover in vain; he has kept the feeling of home-sickness for his portfolio, and desires to be employed by the Prince de Bismarck. Perhaps he does not take sufficient account himself of his aspirations, but they exist, although well concealed; and at the bottom of his soul he says to himself, "If I triumph, I will be great and must be taken into account." This secret thought communicates for some time past a certain indecision to his actions. He has not known how to impress upon his friends any clear direction; he has induced them to yield sometimes, and to resist inopportunely, following the exigencies of the moment and according as he wished to appear amiable or formidable. In 1878 he decided by his attitude the rejection of the law against the socialists: a useful and necessary law however, but which they were not able to pass except by means of a dissolution, and even then solely

or launch maledictions. As to conducting themselves reasonably and with prudence, in accordance with a determined and premeditated plan, that is impossible for them; they have too many personal interests at stake.

Of the other factions of the Reichstag it is useless to speak. The Poles are obstinate in their constant opposition based upon a preconceived determination, the Socialists influential by their eloquence, the Alsatians and Lorrainians powerless. These three elements are worthless to the same degree, but at least are not detrimental to their own cause either because it is too good to be spoiled or too desperate to be restored, or, finally, because it is impossible to make proselytes. As to the Parliament taken as a whole, it embraces, as I have just shown, some ambitious persons, some utopians, many fools, rarely men of genius, utilitarians of no consequence, and a certain quantity of individuals who are seriously convinced that a cross of itself suffices to govern the world. The Reichstag, moreover, entertains strange illusions as to its own value. Thus it believes itself to be a Chamber, while it is only an Assembly; it imagines itself to exist under a constitutional government, while there is nothing of the sort. It thinks

it yields to a feeling of tenderness, when it only gratifies the desire which the Emperor expresses to it in a message, when it only bends to the will of an absolute sovereign. It is ignorant of its own force and does not know how to make use of its power. It is only the mask that serves to disguise an aristocracy more atrabilious than that which exists in Russia, for it reposes not upon a name as with us, but in reality upon a fact. It will always be a docile instrument in the hands of power, as long as this power is wielded by M. de Bismarck, that master of the art of sounding hearts, of appealing to ambitions, of flattering the strong, of encouraging the wavering, of governing, in fine, all consciences with his cunning, his astuteness, his energy, his force of will, and especially his profound knowledge of human nature, of its weaknesses and its infamy.

For opposed to this incapable Parliament destitute of patriotism stands a formidable force—that of the Chancellor, whose grand figure is protected by the throne which serves him as a buckler. Certainly one of the greatest merits of the Emperor William is to have known how to sustain against everybody his all-powerful minister. It is true that this support has procured for him

the illusion of a power wielded really by his Chancellor ; nevertheless, only to know how to recognize the superiority of another, especially when this other is an inferior, is something great.

M. de Bismarck has, moreover, succeeded perfectly in his views of an absolute monarchy : in Prussia there is no longer now a responsible ministry, nor a Chamber, nor anything which constitutes the machinery of a constitutional *régime*. There is nothing except the Chancellor, who has absorbed in himself the sovereign, the deputies, the people, the magistracy—everything, in fact, He has so thoroughly bent Germany to his will that one can boldly affirm that this country would no longer know how to conduct itself if M. de Bismarck were there no longer to direct it. At this moment everybody flatters him in the hope of obtaining something thereby, while he mocks humanity as much as he despises it ; and, though more able than Richelieu, he disdains to decapitate his political adversaries, but confines himself to discrediting them in public opinion. He has destroyed Lasker, overthrown Delbrück, banished Bennigsen, and now he is about ruining Windthorst, solely by knowing how to flatter opportunely, making half-understood, indefinite prom-

ises, exciting secret hopes, arousing shameful cupidities and egotistical ambitions. He reigns everywhere as much as he governs ; but Germany will pay dear for the honor of having him at its head, and for having had the most incapable Parliament that has ever existed. The future will avenge Europe, for that which makes the glory of Prussia now will be the cause of its future ruin. It is not without paying dearly for it that all the vital forces of a nation are concentrated in a single individual. Sooner or later the moment will arrive when this nation must expiate the absence of governors ; and if he has known how to triumph over six successive Parliaments, using always the same artifices ; if he has rendered his country great ; if he has understood how to make of himself the arbiter of the world, to impose upon everybody his will, the Prince de Bismarck has at the same time prepared the fall and the destruction of this country by crushing all those who might have been able to continue his work.

PRINCES AND PRINCESSES.

THIRD LETTER.

THE Princess Augusta Victoria, wife of Prince William, is insignificant enough not to be spoken of otherwise than as performing her duties admirably, and as not likely to leave Prussia without heirs. Some malicious tongues pretend that her character might be more amiable, but it is probable that the petulance with which she is reproached is attributable to the natural irritability of all women whose life is passed perpetually in an interesting condition, rather than to a bad disposition. Not at all pretty, she is nevertheless very agreeable, yet timid, owing to want of society, but inspires sympathy in spite of a certain awkwardness, which nevertheless is admirably suited to her. The relations of the young couple are very agreeable and affectionate without being tender. The Prince loves to amuse himself, but that is natural in the case of a man of twenty-five; and surely an Empress's crown is more than sufficient to console a Princess of Schleswig for the little infidelities of her husband.

Prince Frederick Charles, nephew of the Emperor, of whom so much was said in 1870, does not justify in any way all the stir that has been made about him. He is not a man endowed with great powers: he is simply a very good and brave soldier; a bore of the worst kind in private life, knowing admirably how to obey; a tactician by study, formidable by his brutality, but without ambition, without desires, without passions other than that for the chase and wine. He lives a retired life, almost always in his château of *Dreilinden*, detests society, and is only content when he is surrounded by a little circle of friends, almost all hard drinkers, before whom he observes no ceremony. He is, they say, more than rude to his wife, a charming creature overflowing with wit, kindness, and talent, endowed with an intelligence keen and subtle, at the same time with a heart ignorant of no delicacy and capable of every devotion, but who has the misfortune to be afflicted with a complete and incurable deafness, which has not a little contributed to excite the aversion of her husband. With the exception of the particular friends of the Prince, the couple see scarcely anybody, and are very much neglected by society, which bores the Princess and avoids

the Prince; the one on account of her infirmity, the other on account of his gross impoliteness.

Prince Albert of Prussia occupies in the royal family the place which the ball-room holds in a large suite of apartments. He is very tall, well made, and represents admirably his country on all occasions when it is necessary. At baptisms, marriages, coronations, funerals, everywhere where the presence of a Hohenzollern is useful, either for reasons of expediency or courtesy towards another reigning house, he is seen figuring in his blue dragoon uniform, in his tightly fitting jacket—head high, blank look, but with martial air. With the exception of these occasions of ceremony he remains at Hanover, shut up in that city like a gilded coach in its coach-house. He is an honest man, an excellent husband, a good father, and just such a prince as may be seen every day—no better, no worse than others—enjoying his position, and never dreaming that fate could have made him born in any other.

Besides these different persons the royal family counts also some members too insignificant to be considered. There is indeed the Princess Charlotte of Meinigen, eldest daughter of the Prince Imperial; but when one has said of her that she

is a young woman very gay, very pretty, very coquettish, very much courted, very fond of distraction, very badly married to a man who does not deserve her, one has nothing more to add on her account.

As to the Prince and Princess of Hohenzollern, I do not know whether they are counted among the members of this august house, although the Emperor has accorded them the rank. It has a strange position—that of this household. Before his marriage the Prince Frederick lived in Berlin as a private individual, went into society both bad and good, had many well-known *liaisons*—in a word, led the life of a bachelor in the fullest signification of the word. They were so much accustomed in society to consider him as a person of no consequence, that when he married nobody was willing to accord it to his wife. And yet the Empress took the latter under her protection, gave her a lady of honor, and exacted that she should be treated as a princess of the blood. This decision provoked frightful tempests in Berlin. All the aristocratic and feminine princely clan refused to recognize the precedence of the Princess Louise, asserting that a Thurn and Taxis had no right to any, and forgetting com-

pletely that the Hohenzollerns are the cousins of the King. After battles, cries, protestations, they had nevertheless to be resigned; but the poor Princess was also obliged to pay for the concessions made on her account. They found her ugly, awkward, haughty, disagreeable, and at the present time, after four years have passed, she has never been pardoned the social position acquired by her marriage. Envy, low and vile envy, attacks continually this young woman, graceful as she is pretty, intelligent as she is good, amiable as she is benevolent; a living impersonation of charm, wit, and beauty—of everything, in a word, which constitutes feminine attraction. In spite of her numerous accomplishments the Princess Frederick de Hohenzollern is not counted among the happy ones of this world; she divines without doubt the hatred as well as the malevolence by which she is surrounded, for she lives very much isolated, seeing only some chosen persons, overcome with *ennui*, chained down by a rigid etiquette from which she is the first to suffer, but which nevertheless she is accused of wishing to keep up around her.

THE COURT.

FOURTH LETTER.

THE immediate surrounding of the Emperor is not commendable in any way. It is an assemblage of valetudinarians. The Court at present produces the impression of furniture of an old museum. One is accustomed to find always the same persons in the same place. When on a gala night one sees the sovereign advance, preceded by a whole *cortège* of cripples, and followed by people who, by the aid of art, try to repair the irreparable ravages of years, one cannot fail to admire this king, who has known how to outlive two generations while remaining robust and vigorous himself.

Physical decrepitude may be overlooked—that is pardoned to the old parade horses who surround the Emperor; but one cannot but feel disgusted by all his favorites, who abuse not the affection but the kindness of their sovereign to obtain favors of all kinds—this one a title, that one a decoration. All believe they have a right to put

aside those who annoy them by their haughtiness and insolent way of watching over the monarch, as if he belonged to them solely. The Emperor does not perceive these little manœuvres: he persists in keeping near him his old servants, and although he may be too egotistical to regret them if death should remove them, he does not like to be separated from them when they are still in passable health. In this way the Count Puckler rests always at the head of the royal house, and the Count Perponcher remains court marshal, although one is almost blind, and the other—it is better not to speak too much of the other.

The personal service of the Emperor is performed by six *aides-de-camp*. Two of them, the Count Lehndorff and the Prince Antoine Radziwill, are already generals, and have not quitted their post for fifteen years, if not longer. Of the second I will speak more particularly in another chapter. As to the first, he is an ex-Lovelace, an old heart-devourer, who has been in the good graces of almost all the beauties of Berlin. Of empty mind, immense vanity, and profound egotism, he has nevertheless known how to please by reason of his personal beauty and his foppery. He is not a bad man; yet he has become obnoxious, either

from lack of delicacy or from stupidity. He has understood how to keep in the good graces of the Emperor; he has even succeeded in making him pay his debts—nobody has ever known why. His position at court is so well established, that all the mothers quarrel over him in spite of his tempestuous past. But about two years ago the Count, to the despair of a great number of young girls, and of a handsome widow who counted so confidently upon marrying him that she had already arranged for him a study, asked the hand of Mlle. de Kanitz, a young lady of twenty years, pretty, amiable, but insignificant, and who appeared to have been the very last one of whom an old libertine would have become enamored. The marriage took place, and up to the present, the union counts among the happiest in the world.

The four other *aides-de-camp* of the Emperor are nullities in point of influence and individuality. One, however, is an exception—the Prince Henry XVIII. of Reuss, a handsome young man, a bold hunter, very well established in society, amiable, a good fellow, a little stupid, passably vain, but a successful man all the same, having made in his time a great deal of court to the women, and posing to-day as disgusted with love;

of satirical humor, sometimes even very disdainful; whole-souled in his sympathies and antipathies, nursing revenge and knowing how to gratify it in his character of good talker. He is loved by Prince William, and will not fail to become one of the favorites of the Emperor, near whom he has been for a few months only.

The General Albeyll, chief of the military cabinet, is one of the best-hated personages that live in Prussia. His functions make him, it is true, a formidable being, for it is upon him that all nominations as well as promotions in the army depend. He is a brave man, quite indolent, who, by reason of fearing to make himself enemies among people already successful, secures implacable ones among those who are rising. The young officers execrate him for his mania for tender consideration of persons in position—a mania which paralyzes all advancement in the army. Never have there been in Germany so many old generals “trailing their wings and dragging their feet,” never so many lieutenants waiting in vain for promotion. Rightly or wrongly—I don’t know which—M. d’Albeyll is accused of being responsible for this state of things, and the day on which he obtains the command of a *corps*

d'armée will be celebrated by fireworks in all the regiments. Personally the General is very amiable, very polite, but of a false character, like that of all the Prussians of the eastern provinces. He has *protégés* for whom he tries to find places, which is an injustice on the part of a man in the possession of so important a post as his. The Emperor likes him very much, and appreciates his devotion; society flatters him in the person of his wife, who, moreover, is very amiable. She is a sister of the beautiful Duchess of Manchester; with less charm and brilliancy than her elder sister, she has perhaps more seriousness of character. Madame d'Albedyll is especially good, frank, and benevolent; she has her enemies, but they are enemies that do her honor.

The head of the civil cabinet of the King is M. de Kilmowski. He is little seen in society, and people concern themselves about him still less. He is an admirable functionary, but one who, by reason of having made himself a mere machine, has no influence. He is generally esteemed, and, when his existence is recalled, he is well spoken of.

To the persons whom I have just mentioned, and who are the intimates of the Emperor, it is

proper to add Dr. Lauer, his physician. Honest and of excellent disposition, disinterested, loyal, devoted to his master and his family, and who has never profited from his position otherwise than to do good.

The household of the Empress is composed of a head-mistress, of two ladies of the Palace, of a master of court, a private secretary, and of many maids-of-honor and chamberlains, who relieve each other in turn, according to the exigencies of the service.

The head-mistress, the Countess of Perponcher, sister-in-law of the court-marshal of the Emperor, is an amiable woman, *très grande dame*, affable, polite, filling admirably the duties of her position, always obliging, always cordial, distinguished for nothing but an immense black peruke fastened in the form of a tower on the top of her head—as null as she is good, as insignificant as she is well-intentioned. She gives *soirées* a little gayer than a funeral; but to which, however, one makes a point to get invited, for one elbows there all the royal or serene highnesses that are in Berlin.

Of the two ladies of the Palace, one, the Countess Adelaide Hacke, is humpbacked, and without

having the wit that ordinarily distinguishes this variety of the human species, possesses its maliciousness. She has a great influence over the Empress, whom she sometimes ill-treats. She is the *alter ego* of the Sovereign, the person who replaces her in all circumstances where that is possible. She loves intrigue, movement, noise. Her voice, gentle and deep, has false and affected notes; she says "Ma chère," "Mon cher," to everybody; takes madonna airs, which suit her face but indifferently; and in a covert way attacks secretly the reputation of this one, speaks ill of that one, makes discreetly equivocal allusions to the faults of Madame X., emphasizes the weaknesses of M. A., scatters to the left the poison of her perfidious insinuations, to the right the venom of her outrageous insinuations. She is mischievous, but without suspecting it; and does wrong to others, not from malice, but from the impulsiveness of her nature, which by reason of its own ugliness cannot admit the beautiful to exist in the case of her neighbor.

Her companion, the Countess Oriolla, was, they say, pretty in her youth; the Emperor himself even, as it appears, formerly paid her some little court, which he still continues sometimes, out of

respect for ancient traditions. She is not liked by the Empress, at whose death she will without doubt rejoice, having at the bottom of her heart the vague hope that this obstacle once removed, the Emperor might be brought to imitate the example of his father, and create a second Princess Liegnitz. The Countess Oriolla, while all the time professing an exterior goodness, is always happy when chance exposes some vices or faults of her friends. She has, while uttering ill-natured things, a little tranquil and sardonic smile, which makes one involuntarily think of the sneer of Mephistopheles. In society, where ordinarily judgments are superficial, she is well enough liked: they do not remark the black maliciousness nor the jealousy which sometimes prompts the lady of the Palace to put her own feet into the brook so as to be able to bespatter the others.

M. de Knesbeck, secretary of the Empress, is a spare little man, thin, bald although but thirty, witty, keen, subtle, and always knowing how to extricate himself from anything, even from the most difficult situations, with marvellous dexterity. He is educated, well read, able to talk, knows on occasion how to intrigue, and exercises

over his mistress a discreet but real influence. He has many enemies among those who feel themselves devined by his penetration, but knows how to pay them back a hundred times the injury that they would wish to do him. Very observing, he fathoms immediately the desires, the hopes, and the ambitious designs of all the parasites who revolve round the Empress, in order to obtain from her—some a gracious word spoken in public, others a Chinese jar or a Japanese vase with which to decorate their salons. The young secretary jots down in his memory all these acts of cupidity, all these ignoble meanesses, of which he is a daily witness; and although he makes no use of them against their authors, he registers them in his recollection. The result of his experiences is his contempt for humanity, which increases every day. This makes him a striking contrast to the Count de Nesselrode, grand master of the court of the Empress, a *bon vivant* and brave man, too shallow to look for the faults of his neighbor, too indifferent to the things of this world to remark them as either handsome or ugly; the father of a daughter very agreeable, without being pretty, and of a son, an officer in the Lancers of the Guards.

I do not wish to finish this chapter without saying a word about Mlle. de Neundorff, the first *femme de chambre* of the Empress. She is, in her way, a personage, knowing all the secrets of her royal mistress, writing her letters, transmitting her messages, imagining herself devoted to her, but doing her much injury by her indiscretion and intrigues. She is flattered, overwhelmed with adulation by all the ladies desirous of preserving the good graces of the sovereign, who sometimes dance attendance for two hours on Mlle. de Neundorff, with the sole object of gratifying her vanity, flattered at having made a countess or princess wait. Rather friend than *femme de chambre*, she unites the servility of the servant to the veiled and affectionate insolence of the *confidante* who knows that they cannot send her away because they are afraid of her. The Empress only sees through her eyes, and allows herself to be influenced by her astuteness to an extent compromising to her dignity, so much the more as Mlle. de Neundorff, like all persons in her position, has neither the tact nor the wit to dissimulate in public her situation as intimate adviser of Her Majesty.

THE INTIMATES OF THE EMPRESS.

FIFTH LETTER.

THE Empress Augusta likes society and cannot dispense with it. Her very active nature has need of being constantly in movement; and now that her infirmities keep her in her chair, she has no other distraction than that of gathering her intimates around her. Her custom has been to invite five or six persons to pass the evening at the Palace two or three times a week. At present these little teas have become of daily occurrence; the Emperor makes his appearance there for a few minutes at the end, and brings by his presence a little animation to these reunions, ordinarily very solemn, during which they drink tea and nibble cakes for the sake of pastime. The Empress tries to keep up the conversation, but she does not always succeed, on account of the coldness or somnolency of her guests, who would all become bored to death without daring to confess it even among themselves, so penetrated are they with a sense of the honor done them in be-

ing admitted to her Majesty's presence. When the Duke and Duchess of Sagan are in Berlin, then the teas of the Empress become altogether gay. The Duke, a type of the French gentleman of the eighteenth century, is well received at Court. He is an amiable old man, very vigorous and active for his age, a courtier worthy of having lived under the reign of Louis XIV., knowing how to flatter discreetly, neither too much nor too little; witty, without being brilliant; superficially educated, having the manners of a grand seigneur and an immense knowledge of the world. He loves to compliment the women and pour adulation upon crowned heads. Formerly he had success with the feebler sex, and still continues to frequent the green-room. At bottom he is a frank but charming egotist, always of the opinion of the one with whom he is speaking; vain of his name, of his position, of his fortune, knowing admirably how to display the latter; an unequalled organizer of *fêtes* and dinners, pushing even his genius so far as to compose new designs in liveries for his servants. He knows how to protect those who caress him, but never harms those who criticise him. He is, above all, a man for the occasion. A Frenchman in Paris, he becomes

Prussian the moment he arrives at Berlin : to metamorphose himself into reigning Duke at Sagan before re-transforming himself into the nephew of Prince de Talleyrand as soon as he strikes the soil of Valençay.

His wife, widow by her first marriage of the Count Maximilian de Hatzfeldt, is the daughter of the famous Marshal de Castellane. One would say that she had inherited the soldier-manners of her father. The Duchess of Sagan, highly educated and intellectual, is a type rarely met with. Her bearing, essentially masculine, has a brusqueness which would not be tolerated in any other person, but which is liked in her. Of an incredible frankness, she says her say to everybody—to relatives, friends, and enemies, without distinction; shrinks from no crudity of language; kills people with a word with the same coolness with which she would shoot at a stag or wild boar in the forests of Silesia. It is impossible to be wearied a single moment in her society; she would animate a statue by remarking upon its faults. Nothing ridiculous escapes her; no fault or forgetfulness of her neighbor is forgotten by her teasing spirit. In spite of this a very fine woman, knowing how to play the great lady when that is

necessary; polite notwithstanding her brusqueness; incapable of injuring with premeditation any one whomsoever; cruel without maliciousness; sarcastic in the extreme, but so amusing that her intemperance of language is willingly pardoned on account of the spirit which animates it. By her first marriage the Duchess has had six children, no one of whom does her honor; by the second, a girl, Mlle. Dorothée de Talleyrand, married to the eldest son of the Prince de Furstenberg, attractive in person, having inherited the intelligence of her mother, but not her amiability.

Faithful to her system of protecting semi-strangers, the Empress honors with her especial favor the Countess Louise de Benckendorf, widow of the *aide-de-camp-général* of the Emperor Nicholas of Russia. The Countess was born Princess of Croy; she thus remained as German as she could, and has nothing Russian about her except the decoration of Saint Catherine. She is a type of a Serene Highness of Gotha. Her ideal is a rank at Court; the height of her happiness consists in breathing the same air as her Majesty. She passes for being intellectual, while she is intriguing. In society she is a great resource, for she knows everybody, has travelled a

good deal, and has at the end of her fingers that common *salon* slang so indispensable at a *réunion*. At a dinner she holds the place of honor admirably, and she likes very much to have it accorded to her. At a distance she has the handsome face of a dowager; near by a wheezy mouth from which, between two teeth, the saliva exudes makes a disagreeable impression when one looks at her. At bottom, she is a person very ambitious, very haughty, very vindictive, and capable of becoming dangerous if her vanity or pride are wounded. Her eldest daughter, married to the Prince of Hatzfeldt-Trachenberg, resembles her in more than one respect, but redeems her faults by the charm of youth and a pretty face.

One of the great admirers of the Countess Benckendorf is the General Count de Goltz, brother of the ancient ambassador to Paris, so advanced in the good graces of the Empress Eugénie. The Count de Goltz, *aide-de-camp* of the Emperor, has been a hunter of adventures these thirty years; now age has compelled him to put spokes in his wheels, but he still preserves a certain worship for young women, and even for the old when they remind him of some emotions

of his youth. He is a very honest man, who would have wit if he were not continually distracted. When he doesn't sleep he talks agreeably, and amuses the Empress by a quantity of little gossip narrated with a great deal of vigor and spirit.

As to the Count William of Pourtales, he was formerly amusing; but good living, the *danseuses*, and the pleasures of life in general have marked him with the seal that time impresses prematurely upon men of dissolute habits. The Count has been an egotist, amiable only towards those who could be useful or agreeable to him, impertinent towards the rest of the world. To-day the old *viveur* is nothing but a ruin, and he only talks from habit without knowing what he says. In the evening he sleeps in company with the Count de Goltz, but the latter keeps an eye open to watch the movements of the sovereign; his mouth repeats always the same common flatteries said formerly with some wit, but doled out at present mechanically. Among his tastes of former days he has preserved that of a good eater, as well as the love of objects of art and bric-a-brac.

He has a splendid collection. His house,

situated in the Universitätsstrasse, is deliciously furnished and decorated; its court is already a little museum. This court, covered with a glass roof, was the occasion of one of the deepest chagrins the Count de Pourtales ever had in his life. He had always hoped to receive the Empress at his house, and in order to facilitate this visit had in constructing it made two *portes cochères*, in order that the carriage of the sovereign might turn within the court itself. Alas! neither the Count nor his architect remarked that this court was too small for a carriage to turn around in. The old courtier was then obliged to resign himself, since his house was finished, to the loss of his dearest hope. After numerous sighs he decided at last to console himself, to which his excellent cook contributed largely.

The intimate *réunions* of the Palace are frequented, besides the persons whom I have just named, by the Grand Master of Ceremonies, the Count Augustus Eulenberg, as well as by the Grand Chamberlain, Count William de Redern, his brother and sister-in-law, and some other persons altogether insignificant.

The Count Eulenberg, who before becoming Grand Master of Ceremonies was court-marshal

of the Prince Royal, is a very agreeable and polished man, who, in spite of the difficulties of his position, has understood how to make friends everywhere, even among those to whom he was obliged to refuse the rank which they claimed. The place which he occupies is only a sinecure, in a country like Prussia and in a city like Berlin, where no one aspires to the first rank in the Kingdom of Heaven while there is a German Empire on earth. In the lifetime of the predecessor of the Count Eulenberg every court ball was the scene of quarrels and discussions without end between the Chamberlain on duty and some ladies more or less unruly. The Count has put an end to all that: he joins much civility to great firmness, and knows how to make his authority felt. Moreover, very quiet, always calm, endowed with a great deal of good sense, he will never do anything out of place. He knows how to cover up the weakness of his intellect, which is essentially moderate. His brother, who was for some months Minister of the Interior, has more mind than he, but less address, and particularly less coolness. His position with the Prince Royal has been a very difficult one, owing to the enmity of the Princess, and they say that he did not regret being called to other functions. The Count Eulenberg

is married to a good and amiable woman, loved by all who have approached her.

The Grand Chamberlain, Count William de Redern, is an old man of seventy-five years of age, very robust still, and whom one can meet every day between two and four o'clock at the *Thiergarten*, taking his walk. He is an upright man, enormously rich, who formerly had wit, is a great musician, very fond of the arts, good towards everybody, and singularly hoodwinked by his nephew and heir, who discounts in advance the rich patrimony of the dear uncle. The Count William is occupied with literature. He published last year memoirs, against which many persons have protested—his brother most of all.

This brother has really the worst tongue that ever was. He pities no one, shrinks from no pain, listens to no prayer, when once there is question of putting in circulation some gossip or other. His life is passed in collecting news true or false, which he circulates afterwards with perfect fury—the fury of a lazy man. He is a malicious being, and besides he is tiresome from the slowness of his speech and the length of his explanations. In society he is feared as much as he is detested, and for a long time he would have been no longer tolerated there were it not for his wife, born

Princess Odescalchi, an amiable old lady, as conciliatory as her husband is exasperating.

The Countess Victoria de Redern is one of the most respected ladies of Berlin; her *salon*, open every evening, is one of the rare places where one can converse; she joins much amiability to a mind which, while not very enlightened, is more than sufficient, very straightforward, very wholesome, and very just. Her only weakness consists in an unbounded affection for her only son, a hard case if there ever was one—a gambler and libertine, who has already made the principal cities of Europe resound with the noise of his follies. The Countess is not ignorant of that, but she is so good that in spite of it she keeps the door of her heart open to the prodigal son.

Besides the persons whom I have just named, the Empress does not admit anybody to her intimacy. In Lent she gives every Thursday grand concerts, to which society is invited by turns; but her ordinary life passes in seeing the same faces, in listening to the same judgments, and submitting more or less to the charm, if not the influence, of the same people, all vain, or interested, or flatterers, or simply victims of the sympathy with which they have inspired their sovereign without wishing it.

THE CHANCELLOR.

SIXTH LETTER.

SO much has already been said of the Prince de Bismarck, so many things have been written about him, that I am very much embarrassed in approaching this subject. What can be said, what told, of a man on whom in turn history, legend, and fable have laid hold? For fifteen years the Chancellor has been shown us under all possible and impossible aspects. They have tried to make us admire his policy, to make us detest the individual, to make us fear the minister; M. de Busch has even tried to initiate us into the private life of the Colossus, to show us a Bismarck *en négligé*, in dressing-gown and slippers. And yet none of these attempts has succeeded, and the Prince is still an enigma for all those who wish to acquire a just idea of his character. Even the persons who have approached him the nearest have been unable to penetrate the secrets of this many-sided nature, grand in its intelligence, dangerous by its genius, superior

to Machiavelli in its astuteness, to Richelieu in its contempt for humanity. To tell the truth, the Chancellor does not know himself very well. He is ignorant to-day of what he will do to-morrow, and while directing for years the events of the world, often allows himself in reality to be governed by the circumstances which accompany these events. The great secret of his power consists in the facility with which he changes opinion, abandons his friends, courts his enemies, takes advantage of the rancors of one, the hatred of another, and the egotism of all. His conscience, thoroughly elastic, ignores scruples; his soul has no other ambition than that of absolute power over men and things, kings and peoples. There is the "I" of Medea in his life; he has seen the destinies of sovereigns and empires so completely condensed in his person that he has arrived at the point of forgetting that this person does not represent the whole world. This is why he crushes all that is not himself, all who serve him badly or do not obey him blindly, all who resist or thwart him. Formerly, some time ago, M. de Bismarck was ambitious for his country, desirous of seeing Prussia occupy the first rank among the European powers; to-day one may boldly affirm that

this ambition has disappeared, to give place to an inordinate desire to exercise dominion in his own person. As much as he has labored for his king, so much he applies himself, at present, now that this king has become Emperor, to prevent him from even glancing at the affairs of state. The German Empire certainly owes its present existence to the perseverance and audacity of the Prince, who has founded it, raised it, rendered it solid and strong. But now that this colossal work is ended, he cannot decide to consolidate it and allow it to develop itself. He wishes to maintain over this Empire an unlimited authority, and hence come these hesitations, these vacillations in his policy, which astonish us so often, coming from this man of iron. Everything is worn out by use, and the energy of the Chancellor has ended by becoming obstinacy and spite. He has been so much accustomed always to succeed that he imagines he has acquired the right to subject to his caprices all those who surround him. At bottom he is naturally full of dash, often acts by fits; but at present, now that his cherished projects have been brought to a successful termination, he conceives no more plans, but acts according to the impulse or exigency of

the moment. He rules solely because he has understood how to make himself feared. Frequently his enemies attribute to him designs of which they are afraid, and which they sometimes suggest themselves without suspecting it. Such as he is, the Chancellor none the less represents a great historic figure, especially when looked at from a distance and imagined to be on a pedestal, as he will present himself one day to posterity; but when examined close at hand, one very soon discovers his meanness, his pettiness, his forgetfulness of the great interests confided to him, in favor of his personal sympathies or antipathies. M. de Bismarck has always desired to see the whole world bend before him. To establish his authority he has made use of all means within his reach. One of the most formidable traits of his character consists in his penetrating knowledge of men, whose weak side he discovers at the first glance, flatters, gently excites, and knows how to profit by. From the moment one completely despises humanity, one rules it; for then one knows exactly what can be expected or exacted from the cupidity of this one, the envy of that, the baseness of one, and the hypocrisy of another. The Prince is a cynic and at the same time a

sceptic. When he thinks that a man's conscience is undecided he tries to buy it, and nine times out of ten he succeeds; for men are cowards and surrender always to the one from whom they hope to gain something.

The plans of the Chancellor have often been talked about. Even his recently-published correspondence has been cited to prove that all he had done was calculated beforehand. For my part, I am firmly persuaded that he has, above all, understood how to take advantage of circumstances, and that on assuming power he had no other project than that of establishing his own position. Later on his ambitions developed themselves; then he recalled the dreams of his youth, and after the triumph of the man wished to assure that of the country. Still later, he wished to aggrandize himself by making the world believe that he owed his successes, not to circumstances, not to good luck, but in reality to a preconceived determination, and conducted to a happy end by the simple exertion of a will as indomitable as it was resolute.

Few political men have had so many enemies, and none has known how to get rid of them so adroitly. To tell the truth, it was not only his

enemies whom he knew how to set aside: his friends also underwent the same fate the moment they troubled or annoyed him. But it is certain that he is terrible in his grudges, implacable in his resentments, pitiless in his vengeance. One knows what he has been for the Count d'Arnim, and one has only to recall M. Delbrück, the Count Stolberg, the Count Eulenburg,—all his friends and fellow-laborers of former times,—who have displeased him, and whom he has known how to set aside, efface, crush out, and, in a word, remove from the political or parliamentary arena with a marvellous dexterity. By turns in good relations with all parties, he has made use of each, only at last to disgrace them, in the eyes of the public, by his alliance. An able tactician, he loves to appropriate the success of others, and has the talent to bring to a successful issue this difficult enterprise. One of his favorite tricks consists in taking possession of some ambitious intriguer and persuading him that he has in him the stuff of a great man. The victim always falls into the trap, and it is thus that the Prince has procured a certain number of "lost souls," who serve him with love and adoration, who naively imagine themselves to be indispensable to him, while they

are really only useful, and whom he flatters only the better to repudiate them afterwards, if the thing appear advisable to him.

His conduct with regard to the Emperor is singular. While all the time affecting a great respect for the old sovereign, he poses nevertheless as an autocrat in his presence. There, as everywhere, he exploits the weaknesses which are accessible to him; he knows how to shake the sensitive *xords* of the monarch whose love for Prussia is real and sincere to the point of bringing him to sacrifice himself when that is necessary. When they are seen in each other's presence, the tall form of the Chancellor towering by a head over that of the King, one involuntarily asks which of the two is the master of the other, and which is the most deserving in the eyes of his country—the one who has known how to efface himself with self-abnegation, or the one who has aggrandized his country only to crush it with the weight of his individuality.

As to the Empress Augusta, she has never liked the Prince. Formerly, she even intrigued against him with her intimates and favorites, but very soon experience taught her that it was not good to play jokes with such a rude adversary;

at present things are upon a footing of armed neutrality between the two enemies, who, not being able to devour each other close at hand, observe each other at a distance, both of them decided to renew hostilities on the slightest occasion.

However, all these hatreds accumulated around him, all these imprecations directed constantly against his person, have had a certain influence upon M. de Bismarck. They have made him misanthropic, or at least have made him take a dislike to the world and become fond of solitude. He lives like a hermit, shut up within the four walls of his palace, concealed from the gaze of everybody, friends as well as enemies, showing himself only in Parliament from time to time, or to some one from whom he has occasion to draw some information. Then he makes himself agreeable, becomes conversational—a good fellow—knows how to fascinate those who do not know him or do not divine him. Apart from these rare occasions, nobody sees the Chancellor, who shuts himself up more and more in the bosom of his family, who for their part surround him with the most tender affection.

His wife is a good and honest creature, very

vulgar in her manners, but having a kind heart; endowed with much wit, although without penetration; admiring her husband naively, with a tenderness as true as it is profound; in no way proud of her position; kindly disposed although brusque; amiable to everybody, taking note of the enmity of some and the false protestations of devotion of others, but disdaining the first and placing no reliance upon the second.

Two sons and a daughter are the issue of this marriage. Of the sons, the elder, the Count Herbert de Bismarck, has been much talked about *à propos* of the scandal about his relations with a lady celebrated for her beauty. In this sad story he played a reprehensible rôle, and showed himself as egotistical as he was cruel and weak. He is a man very vain, very much engrossed with his own person, very proud of his position as son of the Chancellor, and, like almost all children of great men, as insignificant as his father is remarkable. In society they cringe before him on account of the power attributed to him; they sing to him continually the song of the fox in the fable of La Fontaine: "Eh! good-day, Monsieur de Crow; how pretty you are, how handsome you appear to me!" Unfortunately for the flatterers, it is not

the Count Herbert who holds in his beak the cheese, the object of their ambitious desires.

His brother, more serious and more thoughtful, has less brilliancy, but more of solid foundation to his character. He is a worker, a politician by conviction, who knows how to apply himself, but who will never succeed in becoming anything else than an excellent functionary. He resembles physically his father, morally his mother, save a ferocity in his antipathies, which is in the blood of all the Schoenhausens.

Their sister, Mlle. Marie de Bismarck, after having seen die the *fiancé* of her choice, married the Count de Rantzau, counsellor to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. She is the favorite of the Chancellor, whom she recalls by the turn of her mind. Her intelligence is very vigorous, very broad—much like that of the Prince her father. The Countess de Rantzau is very skilful in divining men, and very much inclined to mock at them.

THE BUNDESRATH.*(FEDERAL COUNCIL.)***SEVENTH LETTER.**

WHEN the new Empire of Germany was founded in 1870, the thing was not accomplished without commotion. The little princes who, at Versailles, acclaimed King William as their chief did not resign themselves very easily to this hard necessity. In spite of their so-called enthusiasm, they would not have asked anything better than to be spared the occasion of manifesting it. M. de Bismarck, with his intelligence and his genius, had comprehended the situation long before those who were its victims; he had anticipated this secret irritation of the little sovereigns of Germany, and it was to soothe the bitterness of the sacrifice exacted of them that he proposed the Bundesrath, or Federal Council. This assembly, by recalling the North German Union of former times, might make the little knights who crawled at the feet of Prussia believe that they had been left the power of participating in the affairs of their country.

In reality the Bundesrath is an immense mystification, the same as the Reichstag, the same as the Ministry. The Federal Council is nothing but an instrument in the hand of the Chancellor, who makes it vote everything that pleases him, and who leads it and directs it entirely at his will. Instituted as a means of government, it has become a machine in the name of which one governs. All its members are either creatures of M. de Bismarck or enemies of his, too stupid to be dangerous, too insignificant to be troublesome. It is a theatre decoration very well gotten up—that is all. The mass of the public, who look upon the stage with a simple opera-glass, imagine that it all works admirably, that the trees are natural, and the fountains real running water; but when one makes a little excursion upon this same stage, one very soon discovers the illusion of which he has been the victim. The Bundesrath serves as a bureau of registration for the decisions of the Chancellor. It is very useful for him as a lightning-rod when he desires to present to Parliament some proposed law which he knows to be antipathetic to it, and indispensable when it becomes a question of rejecting a measure voted by the Chamber. In the first case, it is the Federal

Council, which has insisted on affirming its independence; in the second, it is still the Council which is at fault. Nothing is more amusing than M. de Bismarck confiding to his friends among the deputies the mortification which the obstinacy of his colleagues causes him. He plays this comedy so frequently that sometimes one asks what he would do if he had not this scapegoat always at his service. You would be almost tempted to believe that he would often find himself embarrassed if you did not know that a man of his stamp could never be taken unawares, and that if the excuse of the Bundesrath were lacking this ingenious mind would find something else.

The Federal Council has not, however, any illusion about the *rôle* it plays. In that, it shows more wit than the Reichstag, which imagines that it has some weight in the destinies of Germany. The members of the Federal Council know perfectly that their duty consists in obeying blindly the orders given them. That is why they do not even try to express an opinion, much less to have the least will or the smallest initiative in anything whatever. Their existence passes in expectation and submission; they represent not their sovereigns, but a compensation accorded to their *amour*

propre ; and in the same way as these sovereigns are nothing more than shadows, they take the parts of phantoms in the terrible comedy in which the Chancellor plays the first *rôle*.

In Germany but small importance is attached to the Bundesrath. Ambitious people despise it, intelligent people ridicule it, sensible people find it useless ; all agree in saying that it has no dignity, no sense of propriety, and that if there ever was any reason for its existence, it has none under the present circumstances, in which its influence is nothing, its *rôle* purely passive, its opinions undecided—variable, vague, and modelled upon that of the master. However, everybody wants to preserve it. I do not know why ; for, in truth, for all the good that it does one could just as easily suppress it. But it represents a principle, one of the rare principles which, though they have been secretly undermined, have never been attacked openly by the Prince de Bismarck ; and for that reason the whole of Germany finds it necessary to put this unfortunate Bundesrath under a glass ball, through which it can be admired as conveniently as possible.

When I use the word *admired* I employ an incorrect expression. I should rather have said *cri-*

ticised, for one does nothing else when one speaks or occupies himself about the Federal Council, which happens, to be sure, quite rarely. The German in general thinks little of all that belongs to politics. He is proud of the success of his country, but brutally proud, in the manner of the redskin who rejoices at the number, more or less great, of the scalps which he has taken ; he is ferocious towards his enemy, egotistical towards his friends ; but while proud of the elevation of his country, he has never given himself the trouble to investigate the causes which have brought about this elevation. The only sentiment which he thoroughly understands is a thirst for acquisition, for absolute dominion. He would like the whole world to be peopled by Germans. His only desire consists in maintaining and establishing everywhere his supremacy. Save that, nothing excites his passion, nothing interests him, nothing diverts him from his daily occupation. He takes, therefore, little interest in the way in which he is governed, and does not discuss it, with the exception of the small number of individuals whom an irresistible vocation urges in the direction of politics. This little knot of spirits more or less exalted neither admires nor esteems the Bundesrath, but

submits to its existence in the same way as it bows to the decrees of the Chancellor—that is to say, with a stoical resignation based upon the conviction that for the present there is nothing to be done against the irresistible force of existing circumstances.

Among the nullities who compose the Federal Council, two men alone are distinguished from the others, one by his loyal honesty, the other by his cynical spirit : M. de Nostilz Walwitz, the representative of Saxony, and the Count Lerchenfeld, Minister of Bavaria.

M. de Nostilz is still a diplomat of the old school. He is one of those men who in default of brilliant have good sense ; in lieu of wit, a good deal of intelligence ; in place of address, firm and solid convictions. He is always very calm, very cold, very polite, very reserved,—never ventures to express lightly any opinion whatever,—and has prudence, tact, coolness. He has succeeded until now in avoiding a conflict with the Chancellor, but it has not been without difficulty. His position is that of a dog on the watch. He knows perfectly that they would like to swallow him as well as his country, and that they are always regretting the so-called independence of Saxony.

And notwithstanding that, he is obliged to listen every day to hollow words of tenderness, and simulate a friendship which it is permissible to believe that he in no way feels. M. de Nostilz feels the insignificance of his *role*, divines that *still* greater insignificance to which they would reduce Saxony, and is perfectly aware that it is submitted to solely from necessity; but being powerless to change this state of things, he resigns himself to it on his side, and tries only to comport himself with dignity. He rarely combats or discusses a project of the Chancellor; he does it only when he feels himself sure of having with him a large majority. Ordinarily he approves the resolutions which are submitted to him, and in order to be circumspect sometimes renounces the influence which he might have. He lives always on very good terms with his colleagues in the Council, as well as with those of the diplomatic corps, among whom his wife is equally well appreciated. Madame de Nostilz is an amiable person, kind, affable, *distinguée*, who with more brilliancy than her husband has sometimes less calmness—a thing, nevertheless, very important in their respective positions. The Count Hugo de Lerchenfeld, Minister of Bavaria, does not resemble his Saxon colleague.

He is a man still young, almost too young for the important post he occupies. This post he obtained through the efforts of the Count Herbert de Bismarck, with whom he was on terms of intimacy at Vienna. The latter recommended him to his father as a person likely to become a devoted creature in every way. The Chancellor relied upon the information given by his son, and when the Bavarian Government (whose two last representatives at Berlin were almost expelled from it as a sequel of famous stories),—when the Bavarian Government, I say, asked the Prince who was the person whom he desired to see accredited to the Court of Prussia, the latter immediately designated the Count Lerchenfeld, who has since understood how to maintain himself in the good graces of his formidable protector.

Personally the Count is very agreeable. He is well bred, educated, has considerable wit, abundant tact, and as a man of the world is charming in social intercourse. He has travelled much, and appropriated the brilliant features of all the countries he has visited, at the same time that he has acquired some of their most dangerous faults. He is ambitious, sometimes intriguing; a man to be careful of, for he has no convictions, no ser-

ples; except those which are contained in the commandments of God and which existing laws exact. He has not even vices: his heart is a stone; his passions are limited to that of his own comfort; he has never loved or hated anything whatsoever; he has simply made use of some, utilized others, courted those of whom he had need, and abandoned those who were no longer necessary to him. He has never even been ungrateful, his nature being essentially one of those which are ignorant of the meaning of the word gratitude. He has confined himself to trying to make some one water the path which he had to travel, so as to have the dust laid, accepting this service as a thing due to him. His devotion to the person of the Chancellor is great; but it is a devotion due to the position of the Prince, not to his individuality. M. de Lerchenfeld understands himself in politics, but mixes up in them as little as possible; he has too much regard for his future career to compromise it by anything so troublesome and useless as opinions other than those that are exacted from his complaisance. His motto ought to be, *Pro me*.

In spite of, or rather in consequence of, his faults, he is a man who will always be happy,

who will succeed in his career, who will be found always amiable, and who, under cover of his careless egotism, will make his way in the world better than another embarrassed by a load of passions, of convictions, of enthusiasm, of all those sentimentalities, in fine, which our practical nineteenth century has put out of fashion. At the present time one has no success unless he knows how to unite raillery with amiability, indifference at what is exacted of him with the desire to succeed at all events. Now the Count Lerchenfeld possesses this secret, and, what is better still, he knows how to make use of it.

Of the other members of the Bundesrath there is nothing to say: they all resemble each other. All of the same value, all are equally misused by the Prince de Bismarck and treated with the same indifference by the public.

A single one, the representative from Baden, Baron de Türrckheim, is the object of special attentions on the part of the Emperor and the royal family, on account of his august sovereign the Grand Duchess Louisa de Bade, the only daughter of King William.

The Baron is a small man, very honest, very

quiet, very inoffensive, whose greatest fault consists in a violent antipathy against clean linen, water, soap, and all those things in general which savages know how to dispense with, but which ordinarily are appreciated by civilized people.

THE MINISTRY.

EIGHTH LETTER.

LIKE the Parliament, like the Bundesrath, the Prussian Ministry represents a group politically effaced. It is a little agglomeration of functionaries who for the public possess portfolios, but who for M. de Bismarck are only superior employés, having a little more responsibility than their subordinates, and to whom he leaves a little less initiative than to the simple chiefs of bureaux or sections. Their *rôle* is submission; their duty consists in obeying the orders which they receive, without ever discussing them. They are a little more than domestics, and infinitely below the position of confidants. They must not oppose the Chancellor; they are under obligation to defend him, to spare him all care; and besides they must be ready to submit to his remonstrances, and resigned at being dismissed the moment that suits the master. In a word, they are victims of absolute power; victims whom they do not even take the pains to deck with flowers for

the sacrifice, for the Prince makes a mock at divination over their remains. He executes them with a blow of the axe, and shoves their bodies away with his foot.

The first condition necessary for a minister in Prussia consists in knowing how to work without hope of reward. The second is that of being always ready to shoulder responsibilities which one has not assumed. Besides that one must have suppleness, be gifted with a certain amount of intelligence, neither too large nor too small, possess *finesse*, unembarrassed with scruples as to profiting by the inexperience of others, and, finally, direct and conduct one's self not according to his own ideas, but after those which are born under the shadows of Wilhelmstrasse or in the solitudes of Varzin. And, to sum up, one must renounce completely his own individuality and make a machine of himself, a machine in the narrowest sense of the word, not ever daring to forget, even when alone, that he is filling the rôle of a pure mechanism.

One may conceive that it is not always easy for M. de Bismarck to put his hand upon auxiliaries of this kind. Often he has believed he had found them, but some revolt on their part has

soon convinced him that if ambitious and imbecile people are numerous in this world, those who want to follow their own ideas form a still larger majority. He has been thus forced of late to look for men whose social and pecuniary condition was so shattered that they would not have the slightest inclination to evade his orders or determinations. In a word, he has striven to be surrounded, not with co-laborers, but with servants with striking livery but extinct heart. The men who compose the present Prussian Ministry are nothing but temporary partners, aspire to playing no rôle, and make as little noise in their bureaux as in the world, where they are seen but rarely, and where they are scarcely recognized. A single one among them, the Minister of War, enjoys a distinct personality ; he is an independent member in this assembly of slaves, which does not fail to irritate prodigiously the nerves of the Chancellor ; but the army is the sole institution protected by the Emperor ; it is a sacred thing which nobody, not even the Prince, has the right to touch. The old sovereign, soldier at soul, has always taken the part of the soldier ; he has defended him, sustained him, covered him with his imperial authority. Neither the cunning, nor the

astuteness, nor the direct attacks of M. de Bismarck have had any success on this point; the Emperor has remained the sole master of his army, and the Minister of War is responsible only to the monarch himself for the decisions or resolutions he takes. Naturally this post is very difficult, on account of the false position resulting from it. A cabinet mutually bound together always extricates itself from embarrassment; but a ministry dependent in appearance upon its chief, but in reality independent of him, always finds itself in a painful and embarrassing position. The Count de Roon understood very well how to manage under these multiplied difficulties. When he was in power, moreover, the authority and the despotism of the Chancellor had not yet attained their extreme limits. His successor, General de Kameke, has already had a great deal to do to sustain himself against the Prince, who, however, has ended by compelling him to retire, after long years of a quiet but implacable struggle. General Bronsart de Schellendorff, the present Minister of War, has been as yet too short a time at his post to enable one to judge how he will fulfil its duties. For this reason I will say but little, save this: that when he was nominated there

were rejoicings in a certain circle, indignation in another, and some little astonishment everywhere ; for the mass of the public, which founds its opinion upon appearances, and which knows nothing of what passes behind the scenes, expected quite a different choice.

A nomination which has astonished nobody, for example, was that of the Count Paul de Hatzfeldt to the post of Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs. They were prepared for it in advance, and they were only surprised at the slowness with which the matter was accomplished. This slowness, this delay in giving to the Count de Hatzfeldt the title of the place whose functions he already exercised, had its cause in a certain condition of fortune of the new Minister, who, in debt over his head, could not maintain his rank in a becoming manner as long as he was in such grave embarrassment in his circumstances. The Chancellor, who knew all these details, was the saving angel of M. de Hatzfeldt, who was always numbered among his favorites. He obtained from his principal creditor, the banker Bleichröder, a promise to refrain from pressing a part of his claims, or at least that he would grant time before putting them in execution; and in that way he

succeeded in assuring to the Count an existence, if not exempt from pecuniary cares, at least free from material obstacles and capable of being devoted solely to the service of his master.

The Count de Hatzfeldt is one of those personages that are often met with among high officials ; that is to say, one who, holding that the end justifies the means, is very skilful in managing matters from which he might derive a personal advantage. He is neither good nor bad, although refinedly corrupt, ambitious of fortune rather than of glory, intelligent without being educated, intellectual without penetration, amiable by habit, very agreeable as a man of the world, as a political man noxious, even dangerous. He fills his position in an admirable way : knows how to receive ambassadors with a charming smile, dismiss them with a gracious bow ; never allows himself to utter an opinion ; pretends not to read the journals, to dislike politics ; and, while all the time assuming innocence, tries to pass himself off as very astute. At the bottom he deceives himself more than he deceives others, for M. de Bismarck, while permitting him to execute his plans, does not do him the honor to confide to him his intentions.

The Count will never have, in the eyes of the representatives of foreign countries, the authority of his predecessor, M. de Bülow. They believe, indeed, in his word, but they have no confidence in his promises—perhaps because they divine that he is not a man to respect them himself, still less to keep them in opposition to his formidable chief. He is, notwithstanding, generally liked in society, where one does not trouble himself ordinarily about the morality or antecedents of those to whom one gives the hand, provided that they have a recognized position. His frank bearing often gives rise to a mistaken view of him, and the natural easiness of his character has made him many friends. As a public man he represents nothing; as a private individual certain reservations must be made, and he is only worthy fundamentally of that ordinary sympathy which every well-bred man inspires who converses ten minutes agreeably.

Count Paul was married to a very pretty woman, an American lady, from whom he is divorced, and who is surrounded with numerous admirers. Among these last it is not rare to see M. de Hatzfeldt himself, making his court with such perfect ease that I have often taken upon myself in

my romantic hours to wish him renewed success.

There is nothing to say of the other Ministers, for they do not represent any power, any opinion, or even any individuality whatever. They are very active, each in his department; and while watching with extreme care the affairs which are in their province, they do not mix up with any of the great questions of general politics. With these they interest themselves very little. They are admirable *bureaucrats*, incapable of compromising the great work with which they are associated, but equally incapable of directing it, of conducting it, or leading it to a successful termination. They are only specialists, or rather *utilités*. But what will become of all these automaton the day when the skilful hand that moves them no longer bestows upon them that impulse which they will be powerless to find in their own proper movement? The motive which has determined the Chancellor to surround himself with what are simply active nullities has its grandeur, for it has permitted him to execute all his projects without the least opposition; it has procured for the general soldiers of a blind obedience. But, on the other hand, the tyranny of M. de Bismarck has

had the disadvantage for Germany of destroying all the men capable of replacing the Colossus to whom it is to-day surrendered. The Prince is the living embodiment of a system, of a policy, of a government, of all which constitutes the life and organism of a nation. The Colossus having disappeared, without doubt the Empire of Germany will continue to exist ; but of that which sustained it there will remain nothing but feet of clay.

THE POLITICS OF PRUSSIA.

NINTH LETTER.

IN my character of an old diplomat, you anticipate that I should speak to you of general politics. Do not hope for any long developments upon this subject ; I shall devote to it but a few pages.

The questions which touch upon diplomacy are not of a kind that can be treated in a space as restricted as the limits of a letter. Moreover, you have not yet attained the age when one gets enthusiastic over politics. It is a thing in which one is interested later, at the time when life is cold and clear as a maxim of La Rochefoucauld. You are still at that moment when one sees only the fact itself, without looking for the causes or the circumstances, sometimes insignificant, which have brought it about. You are, however, curious to know my opinion upon an alliance between Prussia and Russia, or upon the intimate union which seems to exist between the courts of Vienna and of Berlin. I have not the leisure to dwell upon the thousand little details which would prove to

you that this union and this understanding are not and never will be anything but expedients, and that they remind one too much of the falsehoods which Frederick II. made use of, not, I confess, without success.

Before Frederick II., and already in the times of the great Elector, the policy of Prussia had always consisted in simulating friendships and striving to make dupes. Thanks to this system, wisely conducted and ingeniously pursued, she succeeded, little by little, or rather her princes have succeeded for her, in imposing herself upon surprised Europe, and in forcing her to bow before the ancient tributary of Poland. Remark, I pray you, that this greatness has not been owing to the efforts or the valor of the country, but is simply the work of some men who through many generations have pursued the same object, and in whom the entire nation is incarnated. The German in general, the Prussian in particular, has a blind faith in the energy of the house of Hohenzollern. The nature of the German is calm, good at bottom, ferocious only by fits and starts, indolent, apathetic, capable of perseverance, but not of initiative. The Prussian carries to the highest point the virtue of obedience, but he is ignorant of the

art of giving any other orders than are given to him. He is born to be a soldier, has the enthusiasm and ambition for it, loves to conquer, is strangely avaricious of the property of others, covets what he is lacking in, but will not confess it. Not being able to appropriate to himself the moral qualities for which he is ambitious, he has a horror of them in the case of his neighbor, and for that reason wishes absolutely to assimilate this neighbor, hoping that some miracle of transfusion will take place. The ideal of these convictions and sympathies of the German people the reigning house has thoroughly understood how to realize. It has taken the word "conquer" for a motto, and slowly, with premeditation, with energy, has applied itself to satisfying that voracious appetite which distinguishes the Teutonic race. This is why, for more than a hundred years past, the policy of Prussia has appeared so able, so consistent in its object, and why it has been in reality so variable, uniting itself to those whom it should have combated with as much facility as it combated those with whom it ought to have united ; so devoid of prejudices, so exempt from prepossessions, so completely indifferent to all system ; in fine, so entirely egotistical. The Hohenzollerns would

have considered the pursuit of an object such as that followed up by Richelieu when wishing to lower the house of Austria, as a weakness. Prussia has never understood power otherwise than as founded upon great territorial possessions ; it has always been ruled by envy, jealousy, vengeance ; in a word, by the worst human sentiments. The Hohenzollerns have always had the conviction that they were raised up by God to aggrandize the nation, whose instincts they have appeased rather than elevated the character. Prussian policy has always consisted in flattering, then in abandoning and crushing, those who have had the simplicity to believe in its protestations of friendship or of devotion. It understood how to lull asleep the vigilance of France in 1866, acquire the sympathies of Russia in 1870, conciliate England at the Congress of Berlin, and attack Austria by an alliance a year later. Its plan has never been anything else than to embroil nations among themselves or foment domestic difficulties by which to profit.

It was thus that she rejoiced at the annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina by the house of Hapsburg, and that she contributed with all her power to the creation of a Bulgaria, by the aid of which

it was possible for her to irritate the nerves of the Cabinet of Saint Petersburg, and revive one day the eternal question of the East. She wishes to be mixed up with everything, hover over everything, but simply from egotism and never from lofty ambition. She is intriguing, but formidable; for she is not susceptible of any enthusiasm, is inaccessible to pity, and bases her action upon the coldest, the most exact, the most merciless calculation. She is never more to be feared than at the moment when she seems well disposed toward her neighbors; never to be so much mistrusted as when protesting her love for peace.

Much has been said of the harmony which existed between the courts of Prussia and of Russia, and one has striven still harder to prove that since the death of Alexander II. this harmony and these pleasant relations have been very much cooled. I believe that this view is false, so far at least as concerns Russia, which, in spite of the excited cries of certain journals, has not the penetration to perceive the danger it runs. At Berlin, on the contrary, they wish now to conciliate the sympathies of Alexander III.; first, in order to prevent any good understanding between him and France, and, second, because it has been

determined to urge him forward against Austria, whom they are beginning to find troublesome.

You will protest against it on reading this, but if you observe events with care you will see that I am right. For a long time there has existed a secret rivalry between the Hohenzollerns and the Hapsburgs. The first have already succeeded in wresting from the second the diadem of Charlemagne and of Barbarossa; but they still are angry with them for the retention of that imperial title which they must share with them, and cannot accustom themselves to that rival empire with which they are obliged to reckon. Their dream takes delight in the hope of driving back to Hungary the heirs of Maria Theresa and of absorbing the Austrian provinces into the great German country. This dream they will realize one day—for they don't know what defeat is. Then they will abandon Russia, who will have lent them her aid unreflectingly, and will think themselves masters of Europe and of the world until a coalition of all the other powers arouses them from their proud sleep; perhaps even then they will know how to avoid new perils, for they are as crafty as they are strong.

But, you will ask me, are there no means of ar-

resting the extension of the power which threatens all nations? Alas! my young friend, I do not see any. In all times the barbarians have triumphed, and brute force has always got the better of intelligence, genius, mind, refinement, and, in short, the charm of civilization. The old Roman Empire itself was unable to repel the shock of the Teutonic hordes. How then can you expect that our present society could resist it? To-day fraternity is ignored; they don't know how to unite against danger. The only thing which would be capable of distracting the attention of Prussia would consist in abandoning to her Austria, the object of her secret covetousness, on the condition of restoring Alsace-Lorraine to France, and allowing Russia to install herself at Constantinople; but a Richelieu would be needed to realize such a conception, and we have not even a Mazarin in all Europe. England, moreover, would always oppose such a project, and no one is strong enough to shut her mouth. On the other hand, France does play at present a sufficiently important political *rôle* to be able to weigh in the European balance, and Russia does not understand sufficiently its true interests to dispense with this consideration and conclude an

alliance against the common enemy. I do not see then in the future any obstacle to the continuation, nor even to the extension, of the power of Germany, unless Providence should send it a sovereign who will understand the true interests of his country better than his predecessors have ; who will apply himself to establishing his supremacy by a noble use of his powers, and who especially will take into account that the largest and most solid tree can still be thrown down by a tempest if it stands alone and solitary, while it runs less danger when it rises in a forest whose friendly branches could protect it against the storm. But I perceive that what I am telling you are dreams, and I stop for fear that you will mock at my gray hairs and my diplomatist visions.

M. DE WINDTHORST AND THE CATHOLICS.

TENTH LETTER.

I HAVE already spoken of the leader and of the party in my letter on the subject of the Reichstag: to-day I wish to give you a slight sketch of the man as well of his adherents. M. de Windthorst is a personality as curious to study physically as morally. His fine, intelligent and sympathetic physiognomy belongs to the number of those which incrust themselves in the memory. His almost microscopic figure is not, however, ridiculous: his eyes sparkle with spirit, his exterior is that of a person always in motion, always agitated, always on the look-out for some way to make itself talked about. His voice, sweet and sonorous at the same time, is admirably adapted to sustain the contests of the tribune; the ironical note is the most developed in his language, and his cutting sarcasms, cruelly premeditated, know how to pierce the hardest of cuirasses. He is one of the best orators of the Reichstag; his

captivating eloquence is of the kind which moves the masses and agitates them without their knowing why themselves. If one analyzes in detail, one discovers very quickly that M. de Windthorst has only the oratorical art, and not that knowledge of things, that severe logic, which fortifies the reasoning of M. de Bismarck. A speech of the Catholic leader moves, however, but without convincing. The thought of the orator never goes beyond the capacity of his audience; he addresses himself to its passions, arouses its evil instincts, excites to hatred rather than tries to persuade those who listen to him. The "Pearl of Meppen," as they have nicknamed M. de Windthorst, has an immense ascendancy over the imagination of all those who see in him a champion of oppressed liberty: these enthusiasts do not suspect that under these fine phrases is concealed one of the most autocratic characters in the world. This little man, with such benevolent mien, such exquisite politeness, with a spirit of such agreeable raillery, is in reality one of those domineering natures which can never resign themselves to the abdication of power. Once minister of the King of Hanover, M. de Windthorst was destined by the very nature of things to belong to the party of

opposition, and to combat the Prussian Government without cessation or relaxation. His position as Catholic has permitted him to accentuate this conflict, and to rally to himself many persons who would have been unwilling to offer asylum and support to a chief of the Guelph party. His bold spirit very quickly acquired for him an undisputed authority over all the Ultramontanes—for the most part very ordinary people; his marvellous address permitted him to conceal his plans from them and not to allow them to suspect his unbounded ambition.

M. de Windthorst would have long since become tired of his ungracious *rôle* if he had not been overmastered by the secret desire to become again minister. He dreamed of his own triumph while all the time saying that he was working for that of his friends. He had already made some advances to the Chancellor, who, having need of him and of his party, very graciously received them. M. de Bismarck, who knows perfectly what dependence he could place upon the aspirations of his spiritual adversary, has profited from them quite often and always managed to have a great service rendered by him in exchange for some little concession. These two adversaries

divine each other sometimes; but the Prince has generally the advantage in the daily contests in which they are engaged, for he never loses his coolness: besides, he is not, like M. de Windthorst, embarrassed by his friends, who frequently hamper the movements of the former counsellor of King George.

It is difficult to direct a party, especially when this party is dominated neither by the love of country nor by that of liberty, nor even by ambition. Catholic activity has for incentive only the triumph of a principle, which it understands indifferently, moreover, but to which it clings as a drowning man to a straw. It is evident that the Catholic Church will never obtain in Prussia the supremacy which it covets. It is, then, solely a question of inventing a *modus vivendi*, which will permit it to live in peace with the Protestant State. But this object will never be attained otherwise than by a direct accord between the Court of Rome and the Cabinet of Berlin. This accord—if the Chancellor succeeds in concluding it—will strike with a mortal blow the party of the Centre, which will through that action lose the reason for its existence and all pretext for contest. An understanding with the Vatican would

be for M. de Bismarck a complete triumph, for he would rid the government of its most ardent enemies, but he would create by it so great a number of others, that it would be better for him to keep those he has.

M. de Bismarck is perfectly aware of the difficulty of this situation. As long as things are in their present *statu quo*, it is always easy for him to obtain a majority, either by alluring the Ultramontanes with the promise of a concession, or by satisfying the Liberals by the rigorous accomplishment and carrying into execution of some clause of the May laws. Once an arrangement concluded with the Vatican, he would lose these two so convenient means for the passage of his projects of law, and besides, would find himself surrounded with enemies, of whom some would accuse him of having abandoned them, while others would be incensed at him for having removed their pretext for war.

In fact, the Centre would be very unhappy if it could no longer attack the government. It is a party which is organized solely to fight; it is not capable of following any other policy than that of combat. If it were but half victorious

it would soon disintegrate, and be scattered in such a way that it would be no longer possible to reconstruct itself at a given moment. The narrow spirit which has at all times distinguished the Ultramontanes renders them unfit for anything else than for obstinacy. They do not know what politics are, as far as they are based upon abstract principle. They have a still more vague idea of their application: all their force, all their efforts, consist in a desperate opposition to all progress, either in the domain of literature or that of science and arts, or even in that which creates every nation by civilizing it and freeing it from prejudices which cramp it. One cannot love two things at the same time; and when one allows himself to be absorbed by the church he always ends by becoming indifferent to his country. The Germans have reason to hate the Catholic party; and I am not astonished to see the anti-clerical organs of France often applaud the clericals of the Reichstag. For such is the blindness of the Catholics that they would not hesitate to call the foreigners to their aid if they believed that by so doing they would render service to their cause.

M. de Windthorst, with his clear-sighted spirit,

is perfectly aware of this fanaticism, but exploits it for his own particular use, and alone, perhaps, among his adherents does not share the convictions which he defends. These convictions he tries without relaxation to strengthen among his friends in order always to be able to dispose of an army by the aid of which he can gently lead M. de Bismarck to surrender. He does not perceive that at this constant play—to give with one hand what one withdraws with the other—one ends by becoming discredited in the eyes of the public, which observes all these manœuvres, and which after all represents opinion.

The Chancellor himself comprehends very well the profit he draws from these little Parliamentary scenes, and when they are lacking to him for too long a time, he provokes them. He has always made a system of putting his adversaries at variance, and it is owing to these trickeries that he has obtained his best successes. His alliance, or even his friendship, always injures those who accept it; so his last and sure method of ridding himself of his enemies is to make them believe that he experiences remorse for his past conduct towards them.

The thing is easily observable—the Prince

entertaining a sort of pride in not varying his methods. The Catholic party has not known how to anticipate or avoid this state of relations with the Chancellor. Thus one could say that its agony begins. The Ultramontanes rejoice at their last successes. M. de Windthorst sees already within his grasp the portfolio he covets; but the future is there, and it will destroy, little by little, these illusions, will overthrow these hopes, will prove to all these ambitious deceived people that when one has opposed to him an enemy like M. de Bismarck, one must not at any price temporize with him, but fight him always, continually, without relaxation, cessation, or mercy, to the very last, until one triumphs over him, or until one is overthrown after having lost everything save honor.

M. BEBEL AND THE SOCIALISTS.

ELEVENTH LETTER.

IT is not the Socialists that one can accuse of bargaining with the enemy. Never has a political party so well defended a desperate cause; never a handful of men made proof of such indomitable and such manly energy. The Socialists in Germany are neither brothers, nor Russian Nihilists, nor French Communists. They have indeed affinities with them and resemblance to them; they employ, it is true, the same methods: but their object is different, and their ideal, if I may thus express myself, reposes upon quite different foundations. They are not rebels: they are indignant people. They do not rise against the superiority of one social caste over another; they protest only against the accumulation of power in despotic hands, and against that of money in avaricious hands; they protest against that absolute disdain of the fate of the poor classes with which M. de Bismarck governs. The most ferocious among them, those

who proclaim loudly their doctrines of murder and fire, have not reached this degree of exaltation except by the force of suffering. The German, as I have said to you many times, is indifferent to all questions of government provided he has his cabbage soup, and can eat it quietly. What does the governmental form with which he is oppressed matter to him? There is then but a small number of individuals who allow themselves to be moved by the miseries of the people, by the hardness of the workman's lot. It is this little number which composes the Socialistic party, and which has never succeeded in gathering together very many adherents, because of the mute passivity of those the indigence of whom it takes to heart and whose interests it defends with so much warmth. Never will the Socialists succeed in becoming popular. They have everything necessary to attract the masses, but the soil upon which they labor is still too virgin to be subjected to the influence of their culture. The entire nation is too brutalized by its hard military slavery to admit even the thought that it can be delivered from it. This is why there are only desperate cases or vagabonds who join the Socialistic

party, of which the chiefs alone are convinced and enthusiastic for their cause.

In the Reichstag the position of the Socialists is most painful. Everybody avoids them; all parties equally fear them. Their course has remained none the less admirable in its logic, and the persistence with which they follow up their object. Although few in number, they never bargain with anybody for their assistance when it becomes a question of making a demonstration in favor of that liberty to which they have devoted themselves. They have known how constantly to maintain an independence so much the more remarkable, as it is a thing almost unknown in German Parliamentary circles: they have never made concessions to anybody, and have disdained those which were demanded of them. They have never compromised their dignity, and have known how sometimes to move their most obstinate adversaries by the savage but sublime eloquence with which they have demanded for everybody liberty, and for the poor as for the rich the rights of citizens. Their formulas are evidently inapplicable, their plan unrealizable, their aspirations unreasonable, their appreciation even of human nature too

exalted, for a society such as they dream of could never exist with the vices, the covetousness, the meannesses, and the ambitions which are the characteristics of poor mortals; but I repeat it again, their ideal is divine, and approaches that preached by Christ upon the mountain.

All that is gentle, mystic, in the German nature, is condensed in them: they have succeeded in imagining to themselves that peace, concord, happiness, are things possible in our sad world, and that man has the right to make use of everything—even of lead and fire—in order to assure them and consolidate their triumph.

This conviction is evidently an error; but it communicates to those who profess it an ardor similar to that which animated the soldiers of Mahomet II. when the old Greek Empire fell into their hands, and when Islam installed itself as master at Constantinople. Socialism is a kind of Koran likewise, but a Koran corrected and adapted to the needs and aspirations of our time. It is a religion in its way: it is even the only one which science has not yet undermined in the nineteenth century. It has its enthusiasts, its fanatics, its priests, and even its martyrs,

especially in Germany, where it has not its source in evil sentiments. It is the product of the natural poesy of a people whose ideal is personified by the Gretchen of Goethe. Socialism, as it is understood and professed in the country of the immortal poet, would constitute a peril of the gravest kind if it were met with in another country personified in the same manner; but in a nation incapable of enthusiasm, too calm to be dominated by momentary impressions, not susceptible of becoming heated by theories, softened by words, or moved by sobs, it will remain for a long time yet a chimera, which will only be a danger for some exalted souls, which are always shivered by contact with the tranquillity and indifference of the nation in general. This nation combats it now with all its power, because it does not comprehend it, and because it imagines that the senseless declamations of M. Hasselman are the same thing as the extreme but logical opinions of M. Bebel, his friend apparently, his adversary in reality.

It is a remarkable figure—that of M. Bebel. Son of a workman, a workman himself, he has only succeeded to the position which he actually occupies by force of perseverance, energy, and will.

He has educated himself, and by the sole power of his talent has organized his party, given it a direction, and finally disciplined it. He is a man of conviction rather than an extremist. He is not ferocious, and admits destruction only as a means, without erecting it into a principle. He has no hatred against the great of the earth ; but he wants power to be accessible to all, not concentrated in the hands of a few. He desires that this power should be the recompense of talent, not the crowning of a glory bought by the blood of thousands of victims. He admits no other superiority than that of the mind, of intelligence and labor. He dreams especially of the amelioration of the lot of the working classes, and demands above everything else universal liberty—religious, social, material. He is an apostle, in a word, but not a fanatic. A remarkable orator, his speech is persuasive ; not like that of M. de Windthorst, by a factitious eloquence of words well arranged and grouped together, but by a convincing terseness, by the truth itself, with which he paints the miseries of oppressed humanity, by the warmth he shows in communicating his thought to his audience, in making it share his opinions, and bringing it to acknowledge the truth of his assertions. He

knows how to speak of poverty, of misery, of vice, as a man who has observed these things close at hand and who has suffered from them. He knows how to melt those who listen to him, not by factitious sufferings, but by real facts; he compels tears, not for insignificant things, but for the hardship of the people's existence, of the workman, of him who fights, who toils, who struggles against indigence and penury, and who will revolt one day against all the filth, the dirt, the corruption which surround him; against that luxury, the product of his toil; against that gold amassed in the vaults of the Jewish bankers, friends of M. de Bismarck, by the aid of which grand seigneurs wrest from him his daughters to make of them *filles de joie*. That is what M. Bebel relates; that is what he points out to the attention of all, the poor as well as the rich, the powerful as well as the weak; and that is what they will never pardon him for; that is what makes them hunt him down as a wild beast, and wage a desperate war against him, and insist upon confounding him with those who, quite as irreligious but less merciful than he, wish to destroy a society which they have despaired of converting.

It is to this category that belongs M. Hasselman,

who formerly was much talked about, and who represents a perfect type of a hardened desperado. His speeches are from one end to the other panegyrics of murder and assassination. When the law directed against the Socialists was presented to the Reichstag for the second time, the violence of his words contributed not a little to its passage. Moreover, his friends themselves are quite aware of the injury which his language and opinions do their cause, and they were not at all dissatisfied when events forced him to withdraw from the parliamentary arena. For many people M. Hasselman represents Socialism entirely, and few of them suspect that in Germany the majority of its adherents are honest enthusiasts, as is M. Bebel, with captivating speech—ideas falsified by a too great love of justice and equality, by aspirations impossible of realization in a positive age like ours, by projects impossible of execution in an epoch when a cimeter brandished in the air is not sufficient to convert the world to the paradise of Mahomet.

THE COUNT VON MOLTKE—THE MAR-
SHAL VON MANTEUFFEL—THE
GENERAL VON KAMEKE.

TWELFTH LETTER.

THE Count von Moltke is a tall old man, thin and lean, quite taciturn, very vigorous still for his eighty years, with cold exterior, polished manners, awkward gestures, and on the whole rather insignificant. In society he likes to efface himself, being naturally very modest, and appears to suffer from the homage and respect with which he is surrounded. He rarely hazards an opinion in public, and some grave circumstance or extraordinary event is necessary to decide him to abandon his habitual reserve. He disdains the world, as well as the judgments of the crowd; firmly convinced that the destinies of the people depend upon those who govern them, he is of the opinion that it is the governors alone who should hold power in their hands, without ever initiating the subalterns into their projects. He is not a politician; he is a soldier, who wishes to enjoy

as a soldier the fruits of his labors and profit to the fullest extent made possible by his victories. He is not ambitious, but avaricious of the blood of his troops, and for that reason desirous of the spoils of the enemy, in order to render this enemy incapable of harm in consequence of their exhaustion. He has no pity for those whom fate has arrayed against him; he pursues them with his vengeance, in order to take away from them all inclination for future revolt and retaliation. He does not like to have anything to do with an adversary whom he believes formidable or whom he judges dangerous. It is thus that he rejoiced at the death of General Skobeleff, and allowed his satisfaction to be seen on the occasion of that of Gambetta. He has a sincere horror of war, although it is to that he owes his present position; but he finds when once engaged that he must continue it to the end, and tries to draw from it all advantages possible by crushing his adversary. In general he is a man inaccessible to all emotion; his kindness, even, is mechanical. All sentiment appears to him weakness, of no value; he loves nobody. He has such a fear of being accused of allowing himself to be influenced by anything else than by a fact

or a demonstration, that he ends by committing real injustice. Although he has great influence, he is not known to have any favorites or *protégés*. In a word, he is a recluse who lives shut up in his egotism, and who detests being disturbed in his tranquillity ; cold by nature, impassible, incapable of doing good to anybody ; never having in the course of a long life obliged anybody nor asked anything of any one.

He is the greatest tactician of the age. This is a recognized fact, which even his most bitter enemies have admitted ; but his is not a genius which would have been capable of manifesting itself on a great occasion without the aid of circumstances. He was discovered by others : which was very fortunate for Germany, for he would never have been in a state to reveal himself, to have raised himself to command by himself merely. It cannot be denied that he knows how to profit by the opportunities which are offered to him ; but he is a complete nullity in the ordinary course of existence. People have been many times deceived with respect to him. When he solicited permission to quit the Danish service to pass to that of the Prussian army, the Minister of War, in making his report to the King upon this request,

added this: "The departure of Captain von Moltke will not be a great loss for the Danish army." If the man who was of this opinion still lives, he must make very strange reflections upon his former perspicacity.

They attribute generally to the old Marshal a great political influence. Nothing is more incorrect. The Count von Moltke has never been occupied with governmental affairs, and has never even been consulted upon the subject. During the war of 1870 his advice was not followed except in a military point of view; and if the Prince de Bismarck has sometimes put him forward, it has always been as a sort of lightning-conductor to turn aside from his own head the maledictions of his dupes or of his victims. The only function in which he has exercised an immense power has been that of chief-of-staff; and here on many occasions he has triumphed over the Chancellor himself, who has never exercised his tyranny over things pertaining to the army.

These two last years M. von Moltke has withdrawn more completely into his shell. Since he has had for adjutant the Count de Waldersee he occupies himself but little with the affairs of his department, which, moreover, are beginning to

become too burdensome for his age. Many times already he has begged for his dismissal, but always without success. He continues, then, to fill his post; he even supports sometimes by his voice the laws which the government submits to the Reichstag. Truth obliges me to add that these occasions are rare, and only present themselves when some cause almost desperate is in question.

If the Count von Moltke is a man of the sword, the Marshal von Manteuffel is a man of the pen. A diplomat rather than soldier, he is more apt at politics than at war. He is an upright character, upon whose assertions one may rely. He is devoted to his King, to his country, but will not prove that devotion by conduct which his enemies can qualify as disloyal. His nature is energetic, yet at the same time conciliatory. He will never bargain with what he considers his duty, but will try always to fulfil it in a way as little disagreeable as possible for others. He is not a selfish man. He is incapable of avenging himself of an injury done to him personally, or even of a calumny of which he has been the victim. His reputation is without stain; the inflexibility of his principles so well established that no one, not even the Chancellor, has tried to shake them. His position in

Alsace-Lorraine is one of the most difficult ; it was only after long hesitation that he decided to accept it, not without having stipulated in advance that he should be left full liberty to govern these provinces after his own ideas and not according to instructions received from Berlin. These conditions were not to the taste of M. de Bismarck, who loves to rule everywhere, even where he has nothing to do. He was, however, obliged to consent to it from necessity—a little also on account of the Emperor, who was very desirous that this post should be occupied by M. von Manteuffel.

The Marshal, moreover, made great efforts at the beginning of his government not to wound the sentiments of the governed. He often made proof of all the tact of which a German is capable, and many times he has striven to modify the vigorous measures of the government or avoid applying them. He has had at all times an eye to popularity, and through a blindness strange in a man ordinarily so perspicacious has desired to obtain it in Alsace-Lorraine. His relations with M. de Bismarck are of the coolest. The Chancellor dislikes the Marshal for his loyal independence, and the latter has a secret contempt for the duplicity of the Prince, whose place he covets from

the bottom of his heart. He would know how, moreover, to fulfil its duties better perhaps than his rival. M. von Manteuffel would not be sorry to quit Strasburg, where he is not pleased, and where he feels himself ill at ease, as an honest man always is when he is condemned by the force of events and circumstances to accomplish a task repugnant to his nature.

The General von Kameke, formerly Minister of War, is an individual whom you will perhaps have occasion to meet, and of whom it is necessary for that reason that I should say a word. He is a little man, very active, very obliging, very amiable, although ordinary, whose influence has always been insignificant, whose best intentions have been paralyzed and reduced to nothing by the hatred borne him by the Chancellor. Between these two personages has been waged for ten years a quiet war, in which naturally M. von Kameke has been vanquished. The Emperor liked him, however, and was anxious to keep him; but the General ended by comprehending that his position was impossible, and that his dignity even would be affected if he persisted in remaining in a post from which one more powerful than himself insisted upon seeing him depart. He retired then in

time for himself, and now tries to forget the troubles which he had to go through with. He is a brave man and a good soldier, of moderate intelligence, well-balanced mind, incapable of surrendering himself to any intrigue whatever, destitute of sharpness, too honest to make his way successfully in the world, and who during all the time that he occupied the ministry strove to do there the most good possible, for which they have not been sufficiently grateful to him.

THE PRINCELY FAMILIES.

THIRTEENTH LETTER.

THEY are the only ones that still enjoy some privileges. They are at Court the object of special distinctions, which do not fail to excite much envy and to be often disputed. In a country where militarism reigns in such an absolute fashion as in Prussia, it is natural that one should not see with favorable eye one caste dominating all others, and enjoying a rank refused to old generals who have shed their blood for their country. However, in spite of the secret and constant war made upon them, the princely families have succeeded in maintaining themselves in their rights. The German pride has not yielded, and the mediatized and other princes still have the precedence over everybody at the Court receptions. Nevertheless they have been obliged to resign themselves to various encroachments upon their former privileges; such, for example, as the elevated rank accorded by the Emperor to the chevaliers of the order of the Black Eagle. The ranking which

gave to the chevaliers of the order the precedence over the princes was the occasion of a frightful scandal in the high society of Berlin. There were cries, protestations. Many princesses refused invitations to a Court ball, and the tumult ended by attaining such proportions that, to have peace and satisfy at least the Serene Highnesses of his Court, the Emperor decided that the wives of the chevaliers of the Black Eagle should not share in their husbands' honor. This compromise, which satisfied nobody, still appeased the first tempest, and since that time there reigns between the two camps a kind of armed peace worse perhaps than an openly declared war.

These absurdities will make you smile, without doubt, but in Berlin they have an enormous importance. It is upon questions of precedence and etiquette that modern life turns. To dispute about rank is an occupation like any other, and does not exceed the measure of certain intelligences.

The number of princely families established in the capital is quite restricted. The majority of the great houses sojourn there a few weeks, during the session of the House of Lords; they leave it as soon as the session closes.

But few of these families pass there the entire winter; still less have they there a house, or even apartments; and to those who go to some expense for society, they can be counted upon one's fingers.

In the first rank must be placed the Ratibors. The Duke de Ratibor, President of the House of Lords, is one of the greatest landholders of Silesia, where he enjoys a great influence. He even, at the time of the beginning of the *Kulturkampf*, played a political rôle in consequence of the famous address presented to the Emperor by some Catholics who rallied to the support of the so-called May Laws.

The Duke de Ratibor has also, they say, been slightly touched by the Strousberg failure. But so influential a man as he always succeeds in getting out of a scrape, especially when his influence and his vote might be of some use to his government. It was in virtue and by force of this axiom that the Duke succeeded in keeping afloat when everybody else was drowned.

Personally, he is an amiable man, an accomplished grand seigneur, as such not sinning by too much mind, but intelligent nevertheless, and knowing how to extricate himself from no matter

what difficult situation. He has qualities which seem contradictory, and proceed at the same time from tact and brutality. There are in his character many gaps, especially in the domain of principles and convictions, but he knows perfectly how to cover up these deficiencies. He possesses at Berlin a very handsome house, of which he does the honors admirably, and where he gives from time to time a ball, always brilliant, always honored by the presence of the royal family, which treats him with especial consideration. The Duchess, *née* Princess of Fürstenberg, is a woman of such perfect merit that it is difficult to describe her. Goodness, charity, benevolence—nothing is lacking in her. She supports with admirable resignation the thorns in her life, which they say, nevertheless, are very sharp. Her whole existence is consecrated to the good of her fellows, and if ever any one in this world was worthy of the respect and veneration of all, it is surely the Duchess of Ratibor.

Her sister, married to the Duke of Ujest, yields nothing to her in point of virtue. As to the Duke himself, his portrait can be soon drawn. He is neither ambitious nor egotistical: he is simply a man who has always sought to satisfy

his fancies, even if they cost him something besides money.

For some years he has been seen but rarely in Berlin, where he never stays more than two or three days. The Prince de Bismarck caresses him while holding him in his power; the Emperor is amiable to him (as he is in truth to everybody); society receives him without welcoming him; the *demi-monde* appreciates him as one of its most generous benefactors.

The Count Otto de Stolberg-Wernigerode, chief of the earldom, formerly sovereign of that name, is the most intelligent among the mediatized princes who ornament the Court of Berlin. He has filled with tact many important posts, and has even exercised for some months the functions of Vice-Chancellor. He is a modest, though active man, not destitute of ambition, loving his country sincerely, but who has been unable, precisely by reason of these qualities, to come to an understanding with M. de Bismarck, and has been obliged to retire from public life. He is incapable of contending against difficulties, still less of conquering them. He is a character easily discouraged, and who has had too little of genuine cares in his life to have any well-devel-

oped energy. When he saw his efforts fail he did not have the courage to continue the battle, and preferred to abandon the ground.

He lives almost all the year in his château of Wernigerode, situated in the Harz Mountains, and leads there an ostentatious life, surrounded by all the luxury and all the ease which a fortune quasi-royal could procure him. Berlin does not often see him, and his house, the honors of which are done by the Countess with much amiability, remains closed.

The Count Otto de Stolberg will surely yet play a *rôle* in the future, when the Chancellor is no longer there to crush him; and perhaps one will see in Prussia, thanks to him, a Prime Minister honest in everything—even in politics.

I have already said a word to you, in one of my previous letters, about the Prince de Hatzfeldt-Trachenberg. He is an ambitious man, capable of giving himself to the devil in order to obtain no matter what sort of ministerial portfolio. He agitates, struggles, turns and returns, in order to obtain this *summum* of his dreams; and certainly, if he ever succeeds in reaching it, he will have an attack of apoplexy caused by happiness. He is, moreover, a very brave fellow,

altogether inoffensive in spite of his mania of wishing to be somebody.

As to his wife, she is a very handsome person, but at the same time the proudest creature that ever wore a closed crown.

A prince colossally rich is the Prince de Pless—a charming man, of upright character, ordinary mind, benevolent nature, a nullity by himself, but so well surrounded by his numerous material advantages that his personality is effaced behind them. He owns the finest house of the city, which he has had the good taste to have constructed by a French architect and workmen. He gives there *fêtes* justly renowned for their elegance. His wife joins to much goodness, even wit, a stiffness which has procured her enemies among people who have taken for pride what with her was only timidity. She is a true *grande dame*, and it would be well for Berlin that its society should count a greater number of unions such as that of the Prince and Princess of Pless.

The Princes Radziwill have in their time also played their *rôles* in Berlin. At present their influence has sensibly diminished in consequence of the war made upon them by the Chancellor. The actual chief of the family, the Prince An-

toine, is an amiable man, who during all his life has had the luck to please everybody, and who certainly merits the good reputation he has enjoyed. A great favorite of the Emperor, he has never abused the affection of his sovereign, and has always contrived to remain outside of every intrigue. In society he is appreciated and respected more than his wife.

She is a Frenchwoman, a grand-niece of Talleyrand, of whom one is reminded by the turn of her mind, as well as by her constant adoration for every rising sun, and by the disdain which she professes for all those who are not favored by the gifts of fortune. She is a friend of the Empress, whom she knows how to amuse by the aid of witty and animated stories, which, however, she has the good taste not to point against others—a matter which would be often easy for her.

By her sentiments, her preferences, her pettiness, and her pride, the Princess Antoine Radziwill is more German than French.

Her greatest fault is a constant preoccupation about her rank and her position in society. She is so absorbed in the thought of the regard which is her due, that she totally forgets that which she herself owes to others. Finally, she is a cold

woman, who loves power above everything, who is convinced of her own perfection, to the point of believing the most vulgar flattery. She is often malicious without knowing it in her disposition to seek on every occasion imperfection in her neighbor.

It even happens to her sometimes to attack her family, and her sister-in-law has often been the object of her criticisms.

This sister-in-law is a Russian lady, still young. She is pretty and elegant, but, like many of her compatriots, affected, haughty, coquettish in head rather in heart, jealous of the homage addressed to her, but treating the men as if they were destined only to serve for her amusement or pastime. She loves nobody, and is not loved herself. They assert, however, that she is intelligent, and her conversation is perhaps interesting, but few people are capable of judging on this last point, for she is extremely reserved, and many think she is a nullity.

As to Prince Ferdinand Radziwill, cousin of the Prince Antoine, he plays no *rôle* in society. He is badly received at Court on account of his political opinions. He is a deputy, and sits in the Reichstag among the Poles, whose ideas he shares.

His wife is an adorable person, loved by all who know her on account of her goodness. She has sometimes haughty caprices, which are easily pardoned her.

The Prince of Biron-Courlande, sole representative of the family of that name, is still too young to say anything about. As to his mother, who for many years has occupied an important place in Berlin society, she is a woman of much mind, an accomplished *grande dame*, who sins only by her too great indulgence for all the slanders which are told her, and for the facility with which she receives them. She is, however, in spite of this little fault, an agreeable person, always ready to repair the ill which her tongue has done her neighbor. In society and at court she is held in high esteem, and it is probable that she will obtain the place of Grand Mistress which she covets, and which she will fill admirably.

A more curious type is that of a certain old prince whose name I have already forgotten, but which you will easily recognize. He can be described in three words: he has the neck of a bull, the look of a butcher, and tastes as little in harmony as possible with his physical appearance. He is possessed of an immense fortune, and is one

of the *protégés* of the Empress, for the reason that he always bows to her very low without opening his mouth. He is a great lover of the chase, of divination, of good cheer, and of easy women, whom his means permit to render more easy still.

Some years since it happened to him to be a party at a supper organized by some old beaux, in honor of some celebrated equestrienne, in a fashionable restaurant. The dinner finished so gayly that the noise of it reached the ears of the editor of a vile little Jewish journal, who hastened the next day to inform his readers. The result was a scandal, in consequence of which our hero was obliged to have deferred to a year later the investiture of the order of the Black Eagle, which was to have been bestowed upon him some days after the unfortunate supper. As a disgraced courtier he went to do penance on his estate, waiting for a pardon, which was not long in coming.

Another exiled man was the Prince de Putbus, who was obliged, in consequence of a reverse of fortune, to suffer eclipse for several years from the horizon of Berlin. He was the victim of the dishonesty of others, rather than of his own prodi-

gality. He was therefore seen to return with pleasure, and an excellent reception was given to him, as well as to his daughters, everywhere. He has still a niece, who was formerly celebrated for her beauty, her wit, and the number of her admirers.

Now all that is ended, and she has made herself a recluse. She lives in absolute retirement, and is no more seen in society. She is cloistered entirely in a ravishing apartment arranged with exquisite taste, where she remains absorbed in her recollections of the past.

They are, they say, numerous enough to give her plenty of distraction.

M. DE BLEICHRÖDER AND THE PRINCES
OF FINANCE.

FOURTEENTH LETTER.

LET us enter the regions of high finance. Believe me, the thing is worth the trouble. You will not regret the *coup d'œil* that I will cast upon a society which, while not being the highest, holds this last under its most absolute dependence.

Berlin is not Paris. In the capital of the new German Empire, as in Russia, they have still prejudices which have for a long time disappeared in France. Among these prejudices one must rank a certain repugnance to giving the hand to a Jew before a witness, or going to his house and receiving him in your own. It is by design that I say before a witness, for in the intimacy of a *tête-à-tête* all these little scruples vanish. There is not a city in the whole world where the children of Israel are more repulsed by society and where this society makes more use of them.

Whatever may be said, the German aristocracy is not anti-Semitic. It presses even much too far

its complaisance towards the sons of Moses. It speculates with them in all the affairs of the Bourse, and participates in the benefits of the great public works; but it surrounds itself with mystery in doing all these things, and denies them with effrontery on occasion. In general the Berlin aristocracy tries to escape the responsibilities of its conduct in the face of opinion by affecting a profound disdain for everything which is nearly or remotely connected with finance or heavy banking operations.

The financiers are not ignorant of this their fashion of playing the grand seigneur; so they take a malicious pleasure in despoiling them of their fortune and putting them at their mercy. The Jews are, moreover, all-powerful in Berlin; they aspire only to discredit the aristocracy, and their journals make war upon them so much the more cruel as it is sustained by the money of the vanquished.

As a general rule, you do not meet Jews in society, or very few of them. It is necessary, in order to know them, that you should get introduced by the aid of your colleagues into the house of one of the kings of finance, whom the diplomats visit a good deal.

On their side the bankers do not make too many efforts to attract the nobility to their houses. They wait with patience for it to make the first advances, knowing well that gold is an irresistible power. They come to them, then, either for a subscription, or for some charitable sale, or to borrow money from them.

All these little services are rendered by the financiers with the same good grace. They only ask in exchange from the obliged party or solicitor his presence at a dinner or a ball, which is very difficult to refuse.

The most celebrated of the bankers of Berlin is M. de Bleichröder—*von* Bleichröder, as he pronounces it very loudly since he has obtained the authorization to add the famous particle to his name. This man is to-day a formidable power. Before 1866 he was only a little Jew without importance. Little by little he has arrived, by the force of energy and will, to the position which he occupies to-day—that of the greatest snapper-up of millions in Berlin.

Faithful friend, confidant, adulator, and passionate admirer of the Prince de Bismarck, he was the first to divine the high destinies of the Chancellor. He attached himself to his fortune with a persever-

ance and an obstinacy to which he certainly owes a part of his present grandeur. Physically M. de Bleichröder is a little old man of a very pronounced Israelitish type. He has long and curly hair; his heavy gray mustache covers insufficiently a mouth badly furnished, and joins a fringe of gray beard. His face, at once smiling and sad, breathes a singular *mélange* of goodness and duplicity. But what is most strange in this face are two eyes extinguished behind blue glasses, whose fixity clears up sometimes, and which seem to be always watching you. Although he is almost blind, in certain conditions of his eyesight he still perceives vaguely the forms of the persons who are before him. The greatest flattery one could address him is to speak to him about pictures and colors.

He dresses with care, and he can be met with every day, supported by the arm of a secretary, taking his walk in the *Thiergarten*. Since he has become a widower, and infirmities apparent and secret have overwhelmed him, he goes no longer into society. Before the death of his wife he could be seen in some official *salon*, and assisting her efforts to be received where they do not wish to receive him. This banker is one of

the most intelligent men of our time; his *coup d'œil* is marvellous in questions of politics and of finance. He anticipates events before even the circumstances which are to provoke them are produced. He knows how to take advantage of everything, even of the most insignificant thing. He has seen princes and states come to implore his protection. He knows that a word from him could enrich or ruin thousands of people. He has the consciousness of a sovereignty greater than that of certain kings. And yet he has not sufficient moral strength to overcome one weakness—that of wishing to play at any price in the elegant world another *rôle* than that of a sack of millions.

To be just, it is necessary to say that it was especially Madame de Bleichröder who urged her husband forward in this path. Since she died, one no longer hears told about the great Jewish banker the number of ridiculous stories which circulated formerly in Berlin.

It is thus that they narrate his attempts to be admitted into other houses than where his character of English consul gave him the right of *entrée*. His perseverance in inviting persons of the *grand monde* in spite of their refusal, the infinite complaisance which he displayed towards these per-

sons, and which he carried to the point of never inviting his *confrères* of finance to meet them, had resulted at last very sadly. The society of Berlin was divided into two camps, of which one went to M. de Bleichröder's and made fun of him, while the other made fun of him but did not go.

Alas, how many of the laughers have learned at their expense that it is dangerous to treat with levity such a personage !

M. de Bleichröder consents sometimes to swallow an injury, but on the sole condition of biding his time to avenge himself, were it only in offering his pity accompanied with some thousands of francs.

If he would relate how many stars of high society are indebted to him for their brilliancy, how many people he has saved from a false step, drawn from the abyss—if he would tell all he knows about this high society, they could make a volume far more instructive than my counsels.

He is by nature generous, although generous in his own way. He knows how to oblige his fellow, but he experiences a diabolical pleasure in making a great proud seigneur or a haughty noble lady feel the weight of his benefits. He finds a particular joy in humiliating them by means of an odi-

ous and coarse familiarity. He slaps the shoulders of the young man who comes to avow to him a gambling debt, kisses the hand of the lady who finds herself forced to confide to him her embarrassment and ask his aid to pay her dressmaker.

M. de Bleichröder knows how to insinuate himself into the minds the most prejudiced, and pose as the Providence of those whom he has sometimes contributed to ruin. He gives audiences precisely like a Minister. Often the Chancellor makes use of him to communicate to the foreign press certain views with which he wishes to see them inspired. The journalists hold M. de Bleichröder in high esteem, perhaps because they have often been deceived by him. The diplomats come and dine with him and court him. Everybody fears him, some affect to disdain him; all those who lack money see him in their dreams. Many obey him in spite of their inward revolting. Very few are sufficiently calm or sufficiently disinterested to judge him as he deserves, and to consider him as an example of the *tours de force* which can be accomplished, and of the difficulties which can be surmounted, by the race of Israel.

M. de Bleichröder has an associate named

Schwabacher, married to a Dutch lady, the most charming of women. Thanks to her, he has conquered a part of society. This married couple have introduced themselves by a back door, as it were, into a certain number of houses, the majority foreign; and it must be confessed that the tact, the wit, and the manners of Madame Schwabacher are not displaced by any means. She gives fine balls, exquisite dinners, and at least one does not at her house run the risk of finding one's self in bad society, as happens at those of other queens of her circle.

What is remarkable in these ladies is the extreme beauty of the majority, joined to a certain polish, which, while not being the true, is yet quite becoming. Their husbands, on the other hand, represent the Israelitish type in all its purity—hooked nose, projecting eyes, lisping voice, with most of them a precocious stoutness. Nothing is wanting to them, in fine—not even the crooked fingers destined to draw in and draw out the money of others. They have no talent for conversation, so deeply are their faculties absorbed by the thought of the millions they covet. They are nevertheless curious types to study, and I advise you not to neglect to do it.

However, do not launch out too quickly in Berlin into the regions of high finance, and especially do not abuse your opportunities. They are people with whom a young stranger in your position might dine, but whom it is always necessary to keep at a distance.

You can make your court to the ladies, but without forgetting that their manners are not those of the *grand monde*, and that their principles even, with very rare exceptions, are solidly established. Besides, their minds are much more active and better developed than those of the ladies of the highest rank, and their criticisms upon these last are always amusing to listen to. You who have a caustic wit will appreciate them more and better than another.

I hope that you will not allow yourself to be led to become the friend of a Berlin Jew. The supremacy that the Israelitish race has obtained in Germany is not precisely useful to that country. Admitting that this power of the German Jews may not be a great evil for us, I advise you not to lose sight of the fact that such an immense accumulation of capital in the hands of a single people might be very prejudicial to the others.

THE COUNTESS DE SCHLEINITZ AND
WAGNERISM.

FIFTEENTH LETTER.

THE Countess of Schleinitz is the best educated and the most intelligent woman of Berlin. Her mind is remarkable under every aspect. She interests herself in what touches science and the arts, is a musician of the first order, understands painting, adores literature, occupies herself with politics, and has an interest in social problems. She has no prepossessions or narrow prejudices of any kind. In addition, she is an accomplished woman of the world, in no respect a blue-stock-ing, knowing how to conceal her knowledge, throw a discreet veil over her qualifications, kind-hearted by nature, and also too much occupied to have the time to backbite or suspect.

She goes but little into society, and confines herself to receiving a small number of acquaintances and friends, composed principally of artists and *littérateurs*, to whom she alone opens her doors at Berlin, the rest of society disdaining in general to admit into its *salons* "*ce monde-là*."

Formerly Madame de Schleinitz received every evening, but the Chancellor (who concerns himself about everything, even things the most insignificant) was excited by the so-called opposition which the Countess made.

He made her understand that it would be better for her to discontinue her receptions. As a consequence of this singular intervention, the sole intellectual centre of Berlin was suppressed.

To-day Madame de Schleinitz continues her receptions, but they are rarer and more select. She has overcome the impetuosity of her character that made her confide in the first-comer. She always receives political men, but especially artists, writers—to be which is considered in society as a crime. Fortunately, the Countess is too noble-hearted to trouble herself with what may be said. She looks for her pleasure where she can find it; her mind could not be contented with the tattle and gossip of idle society. She experiences the imperious need of living with people capable of understanding her, and whose intelligence equals her own. Her house is a true republic: one meets there painters, musicians, actors, journalists, men of politics, grand seigneurs, and women of the world. You do not there en-

counter any pettiness of mind; you have there entire liberty to discuss, utter your opinions, put forward your conceptions; and you are always encouraged by a gracious smile and by the exquisite tact of the mistress of the house.

Her husband rarely appears at these reunions, and leaves the Countess entire liberty. The Count de Schleinitz, formerly Minister of Foreign Affairs, to-day Minister of the House of the Emperor, is a man of wit, already broken down by age and sickness. One can say of him that he never keeps silent or converses in an ordinary way. All is gold in him. What especially distinguishes the Count and Countess is their kindness and sincere cordiality towards those with whom they are brought in contact. Both are people of heart. This explains, perhaps, why they have many enemies.

However, as nothing is perfect in this world, the charming Countess has also a weak side, a fault, or rather a false note in the harmony of her personality. This fault consists in a passion—shall I say a fanaticism?—for Wagner and his music. It was she who made the composer the fashion in Berlin; she never speaks of him but with religious respect; and when he was living and

was with her, she contemplated him with a perfect ecstasy.

To tell the truth, Madame de Schleinitz looks upon Wagner as a god, and her enthusiasm reaches such a degree of exaggeration, of paroxysm, that it would become ridiculous if one did not say that one must belong to his country in something. When one is neither German in heart, in mind, nor in tastes, he should have, nevertheless, a point of attachment to the mother-country—were it only the passion for noise.

The German character is completely embodied in the music of Wagner. In the same way as M. de Bismarck represents its practical side, Wagner represents its artistic side. In all times the music of a country is inspired by the turn of mind of its inhabitants. Italian airs are for the most part gay; Slavic melodies melancholy; the songs of the Eastern nations plaintive; German music is strong, sonorous, inharmonious, energetic, imperious, almost barbarous, just like the nation itself: it wants to destroy every other kind, impose over all; and, a more characteristic symptom still, it did not develop itself, nor make any proof of individuality, until the moment when the nation itself accomplished the same transformation.

Wagner is the Bismarck of music ; his work will last as long as that of the Chancellor. Both the one and the other respond to the needs and aspirations of their time and of their country ; both the one and the other are the men of the moment, the men who were necessary to a positive people, who only dream of conquest, who disdain everything which is gentle and emotional, and for whom Power and Noise are the sole divinities.

However, the success and the influence of the Wagnerians are due in part to the fashion, that supreme arbiter which even in Germany imposes its law. At one time this fashion had degenerated into infatuation. People went to hear the *Tannhäuser*, the *Niebelungen*, only because it was *chic* to do it, and because high personages had set the example. They applauded for the same reason, without knowing too well if it were worth the trouble ; and they imitated the devotional air of the truly faithful in order not to appear impious in their eyes, the same as one makes mechanically the sign of the cross when he is offered holy-water in a church. The momentary triumph of Wagner was in great part caused by the noise which his admirers made around his person.

One can easily predict that the Wagnerian fa-

naticism will not spread abroad, and that even among the compatriots of Wagner it will eventually become restricted to a small number of disciples. Already, since the death of the composer, the admiration for him has much diminished, and those who undertook this summer the pilgrimage to Baireuth have been sensibly less numerous than they were last year. Soon the sanctuary will be deserted, or visited only from curiosity, as a Chinese pagoda or a Hindoo temple. Is it not from curiosity that so many people went to hear *Parsifal*? Very few undertook this journey from love of the composer's work. In the number of these last, however, it is proper to cite the Countess of Schleinitz, who herself is at least sincere in her blind admiration.

Do not imagine that in Germany all the Wagnerians are as enthusiastic and absolute as the Countess. One meets with all shades of them—even moderate. Nevertheless I advise you always to express your judgment upon the music of the master with great reserve; for in the presence of a stranger every German will defend him energetically, as something which belongs to him and deriving its source from the very essence of its national character. The German loves Wag-

ner, protects him to the utmost against all criticism, all reservation of praise.

He believes in doing this that he loves, protects, and defends the German country; he displays thereby an ardor equal to that which he shows in preserving its conquests and the supremacy which it has acquired through M. de Bismarck, the Wagner of politics.

THE GRAND MONDE IN BERLIN.

SIXTEENTH LETTER.

IT is now time to give you a connected picture of the society of Berlin, to initiate you into its manners, its habits, its intercourse with foreigners, to make you understand its weaknesses, its deficiencies, its bad—and I was almost going to say its good—qualities.

The society of Berlin, my young friend, is not a society like others. It does not possess our intelligent scepticism. It is even destitute, as far as concerns the higher classes, of the natural German honesty. It has a certain rusty, uncivilized air which seems to date from the first ages of history (I speak, it must be understood, of questions of morality). It is absolutely unconscious of its actions; its manners are neither vicious nor degenerated; they are simply the manners of our ancestors before the significant word *convénances* had been coined.

In Berlin adultery flourishes like a plant in its chosen soil; it ripens in the light of day, displays, gathers, and enjoys its fruits without scruple.

The majority of the married women have or dream of having a lover. Vice is not considered as such, and virtue is among the number of things regarded as useless. As to love, one meets with it rarely. *Liaisons* are formed according to the caprice of the senses and by that instinct which throws a pretty woman into the arms of a handsome man. In society at Berlin they take and quit each other according to their fancy. The needs of one's amorous nature are satisfied with the same calm as those of one's appetite. Gallantry is there a thing unknown. A Lauzun or a Richelieu would be there impossible. Everything there is done brutally, without poesy, without grace, without that half-anxious, half-hypocritical preoccupation which in other countries is at least an homage rendered to virtue.

But this society, so little scrupulous about what concerns its own morals, becomes of a rigid severity when the morals of any other social circle are in question. It observes the least transgression, notes the least wavering, condemns actions the most innocent, and suspects even one's secret thoughts. The society of Berlin is united like a Camorra. All those who do not make an integral part of it are obliged to approve it and subscribe

to its decrees, unless they would be put under its ban. They have circulated about them the most silly calumnies ; they are attacked in what they hold most respected ; they are crushed in what they hold most dear. It is a battle which is waged against them, and where force and numbers must one day or other triumph. For, what is a singular thing, this society, which has no conscience of morality for itself, expects to force others to virtue, and it has by a logical sentiment of its own failure a hatred of those who practise the good and cultivate moral worth. When it attacks them, it does it both from jealousy and in order to deaden by the noise of its clamor the accusing voice of the opinion which, without that, perhaps would reach to itself.

Without exaggeration one might say that one part of the society of Berlin passes its life in watching the other. This is why it is impossible to keep a secret in it. To give you an idea of the tittle-tattle and gossip which are born and live upon the banks of the Spree is an impossible thing. Suffice it for you to know that there they know your income better than your banker, your *menu* better than your cook, the number of persons whom you have received during the day

some houses where one can pass agreeably an hour or two? No, indeed; they do not exist—at least for foreigners. In general, every one lives for himself, nobody seeks to share his thoughts with another, experiences no necessity of exchanging his impressions, of communicating his ideas upon men and things. Nobody finds any pleasure (Madame de Schleinitz excepted, of whom I have just spoken) in gathering together people of wit around her. It is impossible in Berlin to hold one's self *au couraant* with what is going on in Europe. This city is in vain to-day the centre of the political world: one hears there less than anywhere else the events of the day discussed. People vegetate there without interesting themselves in anything whatever, and the whole life is there so organized that it is very difficult to learn what is going on elsewhere than at the Court. There reigns a kind of terrorism over the thoughts; one dares not speak there of what one sees, still less remark to others what one fears. Foreigners, while treated with much politeness, are still always considered as intruders, and they are made to feel this in a thousand ways as well in society as in the clubs, the admittance to which is often refused them.

Among the diplomats themselves there are but very few who have succeeded in entirely pleasing, and they are those who have become entirely *Berlinized*—that is to say, those who love the dance, the can-cans, champagne and lobster-salad after midnight.

The society of Berlin, in spite of its crotchets and vices, is nevertheless interesting to study. One can admire there a singular pride which is never lacking in strength among a victorious people. The Germans disdain other nations—accuse them of all the faults which they have themselves. Looseness of morals is one of their most frequent reproaches; and you see after these few sketches that one can return the compliment. If they have not the lively spirit that we and the French have, it is perhaps because their intellectual luggage is even slighter.

THE THREE SISTERS.

SEVENTEENTH LETTER.

TWENTY years ago they were young, pretty, attractive: they had long auburn locks, wasp-like figures, transparent complexions; in fine, all the attributes of the Three Graces, and it was thus they were called. To-day the auburn has become of ashy blond, the teeth have acquired a new brightness, the cheeks a borrowed freshness, the lips a more brilliant carmine. The waist is heavier, but its suppleness is replaced by majesty. The name itself of the Three Graces has changed, and given place to that of the Three Sisters.

These Three Sisters are the most important persons of the society of Berlin. One of them is a widow, still beautiful, very rich, very elegant. I will not speak to you of her private conduct: if she has had adventures, they are confounded to-day under a general rubric of numerous and brilliant successes. Moreover, what matters it that one has been calumniated when one has be-

come Arsinoë? The beautiful widow is an artificial woman in all her physical, and artful in her moral person. She thinks of nothing beyond her toilettes, her furniture, her duties, her weekly *soirées*, and rarely of gallantry.

Her youngest sister has not renounced the vanities of this world, probably because she has a husband to whom she glories at the desires which she provokes. She is the least well endowed of the three sisters in point of intelligence; as a counterpoise she is the one with whom vanity is the most developed. She is, like her sisters, a person of order, of calculation, who has no prodigality to reproach herself with, who commits extravagances only for cosmetics, her toilette; in fine, for all that might perhaps be employed under the title of *eau de jouvence*. She loves to be surrounded by admirers, and she attracts a great number of them, especially among the young men; whom she chooses by preference from the ranks of the officers belonging to the finest regiments. The *gardiens du corps* have her best sympathies. This cloud of young adorers, of pages enchants her, because it gives her the illusion of a second youth, and forms around her a sort of court. She is, moreover, the queen of fashion.

It is *bon-ton* to admire the Countess—have I already told you that she is a Countess? As to myself, in the last days of my sojourn in Berlin I had a sort of respect for the care she took to remain beautiful. My feeling had something analogous to that which one experiences in presence of an antique statue well preserved. The Countess, besides, is amiable. She smiles upon the pretty women, knows how to dissimulate the envy with which they inspire her, proclaims loudly the interest which she bears to the ill-favored: she consoles in their turn the wives abandoned by their husbands, and the husbands weary of the conjugal hearth. Her influence is enormous. Never had a woman greater in the domain of fashion. It is an absolute sovereignty.

The elder of these three ladies has importance only because she is one of the three sisters. She has neither the pretensions of her younger ones nor their ordinary amiability. She is a woman endowed with an excellent heart, benevolent, noisy, vulgar—a kind of type such as one meets with in the novels of Paul de Kock. She takes offence at nothing, never offends anybody, gives her hand to everybody, takes life on its gayest side,

and spoils her eldest daughter by indulgence. She has no pretensions to youth, has never had any to beauty, avows the majority of her children, and keeps open house every evening. They come there to play, smoke, dance, or flirt, as they prefer: they can even find there commodious easy-chairs to pass the night in.

Her *salon* is one of the most curious to study as to its composition; and if you ever happen to introduce yourself there, I advise you to open wide your eyes and ears. In Berlin the *soirées* of Madame enjoy a reputation which, I am obliged to say, is justified. Moreover, it would be the same as to that everywhere; for it is impossible to find in good society a house where one can enjoy at the same time the advantages of a club and the charms of a private house rendered attractive by the presence of young women—or women believing themselves to be still young. In this *salon* they all rival each other in making the men forget that they belong to a circle where the women should be honored, and are worthy of being so, and where it is customary to take off their hats in their presence.

In it reigns the most complete liberty. The moment the lamps are lit in the *salon* it begins to

fill up. The *habitués* arrive successively, who, after having saluted the mistress of the house, and often even before doing so, light their cigarettes, install themselves at a gaming-table, or converse by twos upon a sofa. There is never any general conversation, but much of a private character. The happy couples pace the *salons*, willingly stopping in those which are the most deserted to admire occasionally the portrait of a celebrated actress—a portrait which is one of the ornaments of the sumptuous dwelling. The glasses of beer circulate; the young officers unbutton their tuniques or their dolmans; some of them go so far as to tap the shoulders of the house-girl, whom they all call by her first name. Ease goes as far as recklessness, recklessness as far as unbecomingness; and the word “liberty,” which they flourish as the key-note of the house, might be replaced by another which the frequenters of the *salon* would find more easily than I could.

Look! Upon this divan is seated a brunette, beautiful still, with stiff but yet slender figure, with widely expanded nostrils like that of a race-horse, with a complexion composed with exquisite art, in harmony with the shade of her dress.

This woman has a metallic look, her words brief but full of decision ; one divines in her at first sight a cold heart, and calculating instincts which make women of marble. At her side a man with blond whiskers, whose too large nose does not spoil the handsome face, is leaning against a table. For three years he has been coming there ; for three years he has been looking at her. The attitude is always the same, the look alone has changed. At first the expression was submissive, later it reflected adoration ; now one divines in it lassitude. She obstinately persists in keeping this last conquest, in enchaining this liberty which wishes to reassert itself. How long will the contest last and with whom will rest the victory ?

The husband is playing at a distance and seems indifferent to this drama. He has a flat and stupid face. His function consists in surrounding his wife with luxury. He has no ambition, and enjoys life as a true Georges Dandin. Sometimes an enigmatical smile passes over his face. Does he take a melancholy pleasure in seeing every morning goose-tracks deepening themselves upon his wife's temples ?

Farther on, thrown back in an easy arm-chair

a cup of tea at his side, is a man already ripe in years, a diplomat: he is a minister, with an intellectual face, but irresolute expression. He is absorbed in a most animated conversation with a lady whose black dress is ornamented with orange ribbons; but I perceive that it is the beautiful Countess of whom I have already spoken, who this time has abandoned the army for diplomacy.

There, in an obscure corner, a young blond creature, almost a child, with candid look, sympathetic face, is listening to a tall young man in the uniform of the *garde du corps*.

These two are still at the preliminaries which are called, in the language of the circle which I have just described to you, "a Museum." This word appears to you strange, and you ask me for an explanation. I have searched for one a long time, and I have found out that in a German mind it signifies the poetic moment of love, the time when they make verses—or cultivate the Muse. Graceful pleasantry—essentially German. The first time that I heard this word, I—who am a man of the eighteenth century, and know the German scientific manias—had the idea that this museum depicted the phase of betrothal—embryonic phase of the human sentiments and the

psychological state of a love designed to be classed, ticketed, and put as a glass jar in the window of marriage.

To return to the *salon* of one of the Three Sisters. . . : I cannot conceal from you that the absolute *sans-gêne* which reigns there has done injury to the society of Berlin, which is spoiled there, as are the people of good education when they agree to observe no longer the proprieties. I have often remarked that good company becomes the very worst when it throws off its habitual reserve.

One is so well accustomed to pass his *soirées* in a circle which one could characterize as "German Bohemia," that the taste for good society is lost. Youth no longer understands amusements moderated by decorum. It passes its time much more agreeably with Madame de than anywhere else.

The greatest injury caused by the Three Sisters has been to kill absolutely respect for women with the young men of the *grand monde*. Although the Prussian may not be chivalrous by nature, nevertheless it is only in the high spheres of the capital that one sees the strange spectacle of women of society treated as common girls and

called *la une telle*; manners are relaxed—they have lost that polish, that refinement, which they should have in the privileged classes. To meet in Berlin with a good household, to see husbands respected, wives honored, one must descend to the inferior classes and introduce one's self into the ranks of the *bourgeoisie*. There one meets with honest souls, elevated intellects, people with wholesome ideas and leading a life of usefulness.

M. STOECKER AND THE JEWISH QUESTION.

EIGHTEENTH LETTER.

AMONG the problems of its political and social life which Germany must resolve, not the least certainly is this formidable Jewish question, which becomes from day to day more grave and menacing. For some time past it has been sought to be proved that the anti-Semitic agitation was factitious, that it had been artificially excited: its importance has been attributed to the efforts of Pastor Stoecker and his adherents, and they have predicted for it an end as prompt as it would be ignominious. I confess, to my great regret, that I do not share this opinion: I believe, on the contrary, that the hatred which exists in Germany against the Jews, blind and tenacious as it is, will only increase in proportion as the influence and riches of the Israelitish families go on augmenting.

All men are more or less envious, and the Germans surpass many other people in this re-

spect. There is then nothing astonishing that the Germans should manifest antipathy for a race which little by little has supplanted it in all the vital questions of the nation.

He who has not studied the Jews in Germany, or in Berlin, can form no idea of what they absorb and lay hold of.

In such an age as ours, when money is the only power which is still respected, when the thirst for riches is shown in all avowable and unavowable ways, the Jews in Germany are the only ones who have succeeded in conquering this power and especially in preserving it.

Germany is not a country like England or France, where everybody believes himself obliged to work, where nobody is ashamed to put his hand to the building up of his fortune.

In this land of prejudices, where no career save that of arms is considered as honorable, where a noble thinks himself by the very fact of his birth condemned to idleness, the nobility has reached little by little a poverty equalled only by its pride. It suffers, however, by this material abasement, and for some years past has striven to remedy it by equivocal means or by speculation on the Bourse, for which they have need of a

third person, who is always a Jewish banker or broker.

All Berlin, at the time of my departure, was talking of a catastrophe that happened last year to one of the most brilliant officers of the guard, whose wife was one of the *lionnes* of elegant society, and who was obliged to quit his regiment in consequence of a money transaction in which a Jew had engaged him.

The story made a great noise, because the heroes were well-known people; but how many similar incidents remain secret! How many have the same beginning and the same ending, and occur between the same persons to show the hatred of the German nobility toward the Jewish financial world! What is with the greatest difficulty pardoned is to have been the dupe of the man whom they wished to deceive. While crying "Death to the Jews!" the German noble hopes to share the spoils of the fortunate sons of Israel, and recover the money which he has lost.

As to the people, its antipathy is explained by the fact that it is constantly under the domination of the Israelite, who has bought the fabrics which furnish support to the workmen in the

same way that he has seized the capital which serves the pleasures of the rich.

What I have said of the higher German classes is equally applicable to the lower. The nation by itself is incapable of a spontaneous effort, it knows no longer how to obey its impulses; the moral force is lacking; it can neither invent, produce, nor direct itself by its own initiative: it has neither the commercial genius of the English, nor the initiative faculty of the American, nor the bustling energy of the French. It is made to fight, to destroy, and, like its ancestors the Germans, it is absolutely out of its power to replace what it has destroyed.

It is a laborious people, persevering, but indolent as to everything in the shape of invention, organization, combination of mind. The German is an admirable instrument, a tool of the best construction; but he becomes remarkable only in a restricted and definite domain. He excels in executing, but is unfitted for conceiving. He is a mere nothing, and even incapable, in all questions pertaining to finance or to industry; the few exceptions to this rule only confirm its generality.

People like Borsig or Krupp are phenomena which will not soon be reproduced.

Commerce itself, which might be accessible to the *bourgeois*, is, like industry and banking, in the hands of the Jews. They are then absolute masters of the national activity, and one should not be astonished that in moments of extraordinary excitement the Nobles, the Bourgeois, and the People unite in cursing the Semitic tyranny.

M. de Bismarck is the only one who has accepted frankly the aid of the Israelites without any other reservation than that of obtaining from this alliance the possibility of concluding in peace his colossal work.

The Pastor Stoecker, against whom there has been such an outcry, and against whose writings, speeches, and opinions there has been such a loud protest, is only the interpreter of the great majority of the German people.

The Pastor is not an isolated individual preaching in favor of the triumph of his personal ideas: he is one of those figures in which are embodied the whole soul of a nation; as was, for example, the Duke de Guise during the League, Luther among the Protestants, and Danton in the times

of the French Revolution. One may not share his convictions, and may blame his savage energy; but it is impossible for anybody who has lived in Germany not to comprehend the reasons which make of him the apostle of a party.

The English, who protest so vigorously against the crusade undertaken by M. Stoecker, cannot understand the causes of it. With them, owing to their commercial spirit as well as to their political genius, the Jew has become an Englishman, and ended by identifying himself with the interests of his adopted country. It is the same in France, where the Jew labors for the prosperity of a nation which has become his own.

In Germany the case is very different. There one finds one's self solely in the presence of a powerful material force, which has turned against those even to whom it owes its development.

The Pastor Stoecker is not, then, a sectarian, but a man who has comprehended the danger impending over his country. Only he deceives himself if he thinks he can repel this danger by the expulsion of the Israelitish race.

It does not suffice to rid one's self of an evil: one must know if he will not cause thereby a worse one. Now I ask myself what will become

of the material greatness of Germany if the desires of M. Stoecker were suddenly realized.

The poor man would be very much embarrassed at his victory. There is there a mechanism which could not be broken with impunity.

An Edict of Nantes or a St. Bartholomew against the Jews would be a calamity in Germany.

But it would not be the same if the Pastor Stoecker would rely upon the principle of fighting the Jews with their own weapons, of initiating themselves in their commercial secrets, of contending with them upon the same ground which they work, and of disputing with them this power of money, which they dispose of without control and without limit to-day.

If in the management of his affairs the German Jew has his meannesses, his servilities even, he has known how, nevertheless, to preserve in his general race character a sort of independence, in face of the brutal force of the grenadiers of Frederick, which has not subdued him.

Seneca has said that a people always ends by being punished for its faults by the excess even of its good qualities. Germany is a striking example of the truth of this axiom. It has triumphed until now over all its enemies, owing to

its faculty of passive obedience, its calm perseverance, its proud force : it has overthrown all its foreign adversaries ; but it is disarmed in the presence of those whom it has installed at its hearth, who live under the safeguard of its institutions and laws. It must lower its flag before them, recognize its powerlessness to annihilate the power and influence of adversaries of whom it should make allies, if it had the practical *savoir faire* of the English and the spirit of assimilation of France.

But what I say to you here no German would confess to, and the Pastor Stoecker least of all.

If you find the opportunity, I advise you to make the acquaintance of this remarkable man—one of the most distinguished minds in Germany. In spite of his prejudices, and notwithstanding that mystic piety which is met with so frequently among Protestant pastors, he cannot fail to interest you by his coldly impassioned language.

The compact arguments of his close logic, the violent asperity of his attacks, the sincere conviction with which he develops false theories, makes of him a man incapable of compromising with his conscience, which is rigid to austerity. He has supported with a stoicism worthy of the ancients the attacks without number of which he has been

the object, and with a proud disdain has returned contempt for hate. His influence is greater than one thinks outside of Germany, more extensive perhaps than either he himself or his friends suspect.

When one shall write the history of the first twenty years of the Empire of Germany, M. Stoecker cannot fail to occupy there a place as the promoter of the anti-Semitic movement.

THE DIPLOMATIC CORPS.

NINETEENTH LETTER.

THE diplomatic corps plays in Berlin a considerable *rôle*, which is explained by the small development of society there. In this city, immense in extent, the number of persons which it is agreed to call the *grand monde* is so restricted that it would be impossible for it to exist without a foreign element. That alone explains the reception which is made to the diplomatic corps in Berlin. They hope for it at balls, at *soirées*, and the *empressement* is proportional to what can be obtained from it in the way of dancing or eating. As to the secretaries and *attachés*, they please in proportion to their success in adapting themselves to German manners. On the whole, all the diplomats are treated as people of whom one has need, and nothing more is accorded them than corresponds with their usefulness.

The dean of the ambassadors is Lord Odo Russell, to-day Lord Ampthill, representative of her Britannic Majesty.

A man of much wit, of remarkable shrewdness

and exquisite tact, he has filled with distinction, even with a certain *éclat*, many very difficult posts; he is a diplomat of the old school, knowing how to disguise his thoughts, divine those of another, keep silent when necessary, and speak when it is called for. For a long time *chargé d'affaires* at Rome, his intimacy with Cardinal Antonelli permitted him to acquire a pliancy, wholly Italian, which is rarely met with in an Englishman. Naturally very observing, he has become still more so by experience; he has learned to weigh characters, discover their pettiness, and make use of their meannesses and susceptibilities. He never gives his true opinion upon individuals or events. He has the prudence of a serpent, while all the time appearing expansive; he serves his country better than those who govern it; he obeys tradition and is the servant of no minister or ministry.

During the Congress of Berlin he effaced himself in appearance, but secretly rendered the greatest services to England, which the zeal of Lord Beaconsfield would have compromised if he had not found some one to moderate the impetuosity and translate into diplomatic French the two expressive phrases of Disraeli.

Lord Ampthill is a great admirer of the Chancellor. Is he sincere or not in his enthusiasm? That is impossible to affirm. Without being a sphinx, this ambassador is nevertheless impenetrable; with the most perfect amiability he turns a conversation when he anticipates that it may become dangerous, the same as he has the talent to persuade you that he has chosen you for his confidant after he has uttered a few common-places.

Nobody can mystify or put on the wrong scent a journalist better than he, and that in such a skilful way that the poor reporter never fancies that he has been made a dupe of.

In all the words of Lord Odo Russell may be found the germ of a possible truth, which even when it is not very true will never appear a falsehood.

Of all the foreign diplomats accredited to the Court of Berlin, he is the only one, I believe, who has ever divined the designs of M. de Bismarck, and who, judging him as this man of iron deserves, has been able to maintain good relations with him in spite of the constant collisions of their respective politics.

The Chancellor appreciates the ambassador of

England, and even fears him a little because he feels himself divined by him. He is not ignorant that Lord Ampthill, in spite of his apparent amiability, preserves the English coolness, and that he will not allow himself to be seduced by flatteries nor blinded by protestations of friendship, that he will resist all attempt at corruption, and that with imperturbable calmness he will unravel the promise which is made to him from that which is intended to be kept.

While remaining an accomplished man of the world, a courteous diplomat, he knows how to demonstrate that he remains a statesman, made to resist and pierce the most Machiavellian combinations of M. de Bismarck's artifices.

He has married a daughter of Lord Clarendon. Lady Ampthill, without having the intellect of her husband, is nevertheless a woman of considerable mind, who tries to extend her knowledge and keep herself informed of the events of the world. She is the ideal of an ambassadress. She is a person made to shine, to receive, to entertain, with *éclat*. One could not imagine her as the wife of a simple private individual. It seems, to see her, that she was born for the *rôle* she fills. Very cold, she has a pride which she thinks is

dignity; very susceptible, she is capable of a grudge against any one who will take into his head to confound in her the woman of the world with the ambassadress. Her conversation is full of resources, but she is more amiable with those who flatter than with those who honor her. She loves to rule, to exercise in the *salons* a sort of royalty. She has perhaps been a little spoiled at Berlin, but she shows herself thankful for it, for nobody in the diplomatic corps does more, or even as much, for society as the ambassadress of England. Her *fêtes*, her dinners, are always ordered in an admirable manner; and if she aspires to be sovereign, it must be said that she accepts with joy the obligations of royalty towards her subjects.

The ambassador of Austria and his wife make a less grand figure at Berlin. The Count Széchenyi, when one sees him for the first time, conveys the idea of a very agreeable man. When one gets better acquainted with him one discovers that he is monotonous; and when one knows him still better, finds him tiresome, in consequence of the numerous occasions on which he repeats himself. He is one of those men who are quickly exhausted, and with whom one perceives very

soon that he must furnish almost everything in a conversation. Nevertheless he knows how to listen in an amiable way, and he is a precious resource for the gossips. Nobody knows whether he is a good or bad diplomat, never having had anything to do but to maintain between the two governments relations of friendship already established. He is a model of courtesy. If he never divines a project of the Chancellor, on the other hand he never seeks to oppose it. He knows how to live in peace with everybody, and will die with the conviction that he has contributed to the great political work of his time. If he had a larger fortune he would be perfect for the post he occupies; unfortunately the economies to which he is compelled have an influence upon his temper, and he sometimes expresses a little too loudly his regrets at the dearth of his meagre receptions. His wife has the bad judgment to imitate him in that, and to initiate the public in the embarrassments of her household.

She is, however, a kind and excellent person, good, charming, obliging, but who is not adapted to the situation in which she finds herself.

Before the present minister, France was represented at Berlin by the Count de Saint-Vallier,

persona grata in certain circles, a *bête noir* in certain others. He is a person very difficult to describe: lithe as a reed, he has the appearance of one; slippery as an eel, cunning as a fox, he might happen to fall, but always upon his feet. He is the veritable *homme de Montaigne*, tortuous and versatile.

Although his convictions are immovable, they permit him to make compromises with the men or things of which he has need. He thinks himself often useful, while he is only ambitious. He imagines himself working for his country, while he is only working for himself. A man of considerable intelligence, he lacks sometimes moderation, and has not always the tact of perceiving when he carries things too far.

As a diplomat he is very skilful and often perspicacious, although it has happened to him to allow himself to be deceived. He falls into a trap when the trap is skilfully prepared and set for his vanity. He loves to have his importance conceded, and with this object he immediately took care to be on good terms with the Chancellor. M. de Bismarck received him with so much the more amiability as he was tired out with M. de Gontaut-Biron.

The Count de Saint-Vallier, with marvellous address, has understood how to profit by the faults of his predecessor. He made it a point to keep aloof from all the little intrigues in which the *protégé* of the Duke Decazes was involved; thanks to this prudent conduct, he has succeeded in creating for himself a protector in the person of the Chancellor and a friend in the Empress, whom he has cleverly flattered by a true or pretended friendship for her lady of the Palace, the Countess de Hacke. But by reason of his solicitude for his personal position he has forgotten somewhat the dignity of his rank of ambassador. I believe that his dream was not to remain at Berlin, but to become Minister of Foreign Affairs in France. With this object he has constantly endeavored to run with the hare and hold with the hounds and even with the wolf. He has often condemned at Paris that which he approved at Berlin, and *vice versa*. One should render him this justice, that he has never been a party man; but it must also be confessed that he has constantly thought of his own interest.

He is capable of being a devoted friend, an excellent adviser; but in politics he is a disciple of Talleyrand, one of those men who know how to

presage the fortune as well as the ruin of another and draw from it for themselves a favorable advantage. The ambassador of France was at Berlin frankly detested by the old friends of M. de Gontaut, and I know that all these people rejoiced at the news of the recall of M. de Saint-Vallier.

A minister whom I advise you to study, for he is worth the trouble for you to conciliate, as he is dangerous, is M. Sabouroff, representative of his Majesty Alexander III.

A man of much intelligence, he confounds, especially like M. de Saint-Vallier, the interests of his own personality with those of his country. He is an audacious man who recoils before nothing, who understands as well how to disengage himself from friendship as to rid himself of an enemy. He is one of those who find that the end justifies the means. Owing to his perfect indifference for what he believes to be sensibility or troublesome sentimentality, he will always maintain himself upon the surface of the political ocean.

His ability is great, and his talents incontestable. I suspect that his constant preoccupation is to utilize them to the profit of his mission. He

is rather a happy diplomatist than a statesman.

He must have created for himself a very good position at Berlin, and the Prince de Bismarck himself is, I believe, very thankful that he occupies himself with gallantry more than with Russian politics.

Personally M. Sabouroff is the most agreeable man of Berlin; he is an exquisite talker, an eminent archæologist, of perfect taste, a great collector of Greek antiquities, and consequently a great admirer of modern goddesses.

The Count de Launay, ambassador of the King of Italy, and Sadullah-Bey, envoy of the Sultan, do not deserve that I should give you a very long description of them.

The former of these would be perhaps charming if he were not held in leading-strings by his wife, whose ferocious jealousy freezes him in society and interdicts him all expansion. Madame de Launay, however, is not a fool; but she is as suspicious as she is intellectual. Unhappily she is deaf, which renders almost impossible all conversation with her. Perhaps Providence has wished in that way to protect the victims whom her terrible tongue would not have spared.

The pair give now and then a ball, where it is horribly warm, and where one as a compensation is very badly refreshed. To this are confined the receptions of the Count and Countess of Launay.

In any case these receptions surpass those of their Turkish colleague, who sacrifices himself even to drinking the wine of another, and interdicts himself from returning it in order not to oblige his neighbor to transgress the law of the Prophet.

I will not stop very long with the ministers and envoys of the smaller or secondary powers. There are only Spain and Portugal which deserve being mentioned to you in detail.

M. Merry y Colon de Benomar, minister of Spain, is a little old man, very ruddy, very coquettish, very attentive to the ladies, and especially very proud of being descended through them from Christopher Columbus. He has displayed diplomatic talents in Morocco, and allowed it to be seen that he could do the same in Europe. In society he has an amusing style of conversation, emphasized by his Spanish accent. Since his marriage he has been accorded a little more importance than formerly, and the number of those

who call him simply Monsieur Merry diminishes every day.

His wife is a handsome, good, *naïve*, and honest creature who has but one sole ambition—that of becoming an ambassadress: which she is very nearly certain of, moreover.

Portugal has not for the present any minister at Berlin, and is represented by a simple *chargé d'affaires*, M. de Soveral, who has the greatest success with the ladies. He is very handsome—top handsome—his *bonnes fortunes* have been the greatest that a man, and especially a foreigner, has had in Berlin society.

All the *élégantes* have made it a point of honor to become compromised by the brilliant Portuguese. Not one of them, I believe, has perceived that he has retailed to all the same song, and from preference to the influential women in society.

He is not a bad man: he is the darling child of the ladies, and consequently spoiled.

For a long time he was without a rival; but the advent of a brilliant Austrian military *attaché* has done him some injury with certain queens of society.

The Major de Steininger is much better adapted

to please the ladies than M. de Söveral, because he is distinction itself in person.

The minister of Greece is M. Rangabé, better known by his literary works than by his political achievements.

As to the other marked personalities of the diplomatic corps, they are so few in number that the review of them will be very easy. France has for counsellor to the embassy the Count d'Aubigny, an amiable little man, intellectual as one is on the boulevard, and possessing at bottom the Parisian *bagou*. He has for wife a woman somewhat original, who does not lack intelligence, but who, for fear of being common, has fallen into the most complete rudeness.

Sir John Walsham, First Secretary of her Britannic Majesty, is a long, lean, and thin personage, a true son of Albion, and one of those functionaries who accomplish their daily task more by routine than through ambition or love of work. He will advance in his career by the hierarchical way, and will retire from the political arena with the title of Minister Plenipotentiary honestly gained. His wife is a little person, playing the *ingénue*, very affected, and very frivolous. A good creature at bottom, but incapable of comprehend-

ing the bearing of a word, or of anticipating the consequences which might result from intemperance of language. She receives a great deal, especially the diplomats, and minces her manners still more than she receives. No more than her husband is the wife in the odor of sanctity with their ambassadress, who has too much intelligence not to be impatient at prettinesses and affectations which verge on the ridiculous.

An amiable, good, and charming person, although by far too *berlinese*, is Madame d'Arapoff, wife of the First Secretary of the Russian embassy. From her twenty years' residence in Berlin she has ended by adopting its tastes and habits, and by loving it, if possible, more than her native country: fortunately what she has not assimilated is malevolence, a fault totally unknown to her. Madame Arapoff is one of those women who are too absorbed by the world, visits, purchases to make, robes to try on, to find the time to occupy herself with others. Her life is a perpetual *fête*. She adores society to such an extent that she is incapable of seeing its triviality and its faults. She has two adorable daughters, of whom she is the youngest sister in youthfulness of spirit. Very much petted in society, she

is perhaps the only wife of a diplomat who has succeeded in making herself completely acceptable in Berlin. Her countrywomen of the Russian embassy do not like her and are jealous of her. They say that the ambassador himself has not disdained to associate himself with little intrigues to have his First Secretary recalled.

I finish this letter, not having, as it appears to me, forgotten any person of importance. You will make yourself the selection of those whom I have left in the shade or whom I have forgotten.

THE MIDDLE CLASS.

TWENTIETH LETTER.

IF the thing is possible, I advise you strongly to try and introduce yourself into some middle-class houses, or indeed into those belonging to that little nobility which exists only in Germany, and which by its habits, its manner of living, its opinions even, approaches more nearly the middle than the higher classes.

One must be just above all even towards his rivals, and you would have but a false idea of German society if you judged it after the specimen offered by the elegant *salons* of Berlin.

When one wishes to get an idea of the public opinion of a country, it is indispensable to address one's self to those who represent this opinion. You will find these people at Berlin only among the small *rentiers*, the employés of the second order, the professors and the *savants*. But I will occupy myself with these last in another letter. To-day I wish to conduct you into one of those honest and quiet interiors where

one can see Germany such as it is before being corrupted by the demoralization of the *grand monde*.

Follow me, then ; and when we shall have returned from our pilgrimage you will smile, perhaps, at certain ridiculous things discovered on the way, but you will not regret having undertaken it.

First of all you must climb two, often even three flights of stairs, always very steep. If the house belongs to the category of new constructions, the stairway will be of marble with a forged iron baluster. If not, it will be of wood, but always covered with a frightful carpet, which changes its color at every story according to the taste of the tenant upon whose floor he stops. You ring: a girl in apron and white cap opens the door for you and informs you that the "Herrschaften"—translate the "seigneurs"—are at home.

After having laid aside your overcoat in a kind of very narrow corridor where the gas burns all day, and which takes the place of an anteroom, you are introduced into a little *salon* where some ten persons, or so, are seated upon small or large chairs, ornamented with little guipure squares, an obligatory decoration of German interiors. A

single lamp lights up the entire apartment as well as the persons there present. Do not forget that it is half-past seven in the evening, the hour at which civilized people sit down at table. At first sight the *salon* in which you find yourself appears to be the ugliest that you have ever seen in your life. The ceiling is painted of a chocolate color, ornamented with birds or with red or green landscapes; the walls are covered equally with a horrible velvet-green paper, of which some pictures and photographs hung here and there serve only to bring out more clearly the vulgarity.

An enormous porcelain stove fills a whole corner of this room, of which the other is occupied by the piano. An immense sofa, the table which we have already mentioned, and the chairs arranged symmetrically against the wall—such is the furniture of this so-called *salon*.

Upon the sofa a lady of a certain age is majestically seated: she listens to the compliments of an infantry officer, who has the air of accomplishing a painful duty. Two or three women are also enthroned upon easy chairs. One of them is the mistress of the house, who takes possession of you and presents you to the sovereign of the sofa, saying in a sepulchral voice, as if over-

whelmed with the grandeur of the title which she is about to pronounce: "Her Excellency Madame the General de X" She does not allow you to enter into a conversation with this star, but she continues to name to you "Madame the Privy Councillor, Madame the Colonel," and finally presents you to her daughter: "Das ist mein Lischen" (That is my Lise). After that you are free, and you ask yourself with terror what is to become of you during the two mortal hours which you must pass in this cage.

All these ladies have some knitting work in their hands, and appear absorbed in a conversation in which the price of meat and eggs plays the principal rôle. They seem to be on a footing of strict ceremony one toward another, and address each other by all their titles, without forgetting, in any of their phrases, that of Excellency or Very Gracious Lady. In despair, your eyes wander to the table: you discover that it is strewn with books, pamphlets, and papers. A kind of light begins to break upon your mind. Soon the mistress of the house proposes to you to go and smoke with the gentlemen. You accept, and suddenly you find yourself, on entering into another room, transported into another

world. All the men into whose society you fall are educated, polite, well bred, although ignorant of the little usages of the *grand monde*, occupied, having all their work regulated, systematized, and capable of judging soundly of the literary and scientific movements of the times. They have not the polish, the superficial varnish, of the high society which gathers together in the palace of *Unter den Linden*, and which makes the finest ornament of the Thursdays of the Empress; they do not know how to tie their cravat, and the shape of their coat dates from the last years of the Empire. They are ignorant of the little tittle-tattle which circulates in the *entourage* of the Emperor. They have a simple heart, timid manners, but their intellectual faculties are well developed, well poised; it is a pleasure to converse with them, and one always derives some profit from them. Remark that I make use of the words "intellectual faculties," for as to politics these people are as incapable of judging, and as indifferent to them, as the people of the *grand monde*.

To return to our *soirée*. The time passes, the minutes fly; while from being astonished you become interested. The door opens; the little ser-

vant announces the supper. The master of the house offers his arm to her Excellency, you are assigned to the Lady Colonel, and everybody passes into the dining-room. The awkwardness of the first moments has disappeared. You feel yourself at your ease, and you forget by degrees the little ridiculous peculiarities of your neighbors.

The repast is of the most simple kind: a saddle of deer, some salad and fruits, fresh or preserved according to the season, compose the *menu*. The guests eat with their knives, put their fingers in the salt-cellar, lick their forks, wipe their mouths with the back of their hands; but you pardon them these *inconvenances* out of gratitude for the agreeable hours which they have made you pass.

When the dinner is ended they return to the *salon*. The young girl to whom you have been presented under the name of Lischen sits down at the piano, and the evening ends as gayly as its beginning had seemed to you solemn. At half-past ten everybody prepares to depart; the gas is already extinguished on the stairway, and the servant lights you out with a candle. One says good-evening and promises to return, and her Excellency, her Privy-Counsellorship, and Madame the

Colonel go home on foot, neither more nor less than the lieutenant who was so *empressé* around their grandeur, and who was congratulating himself at having economized the money which so good a supper would have cost him.

A general rule: German society corrupted in the highest ranks, demoralized in the lowest, can be properly appreciated only when studied in its middle class. However, even there, the same as in the aristocracy, the inferiority of the women, or, to speak more correctly, the way in which they are relegated to their domestic occupations and to the care of their clothing, strikes one strangely at first sight. In reality the enormous distance which separates the *bourgeoise* from the *grande dame* is in their morals. There, where the wife of the small *rentier*, of the employé, or even of the officer, will sacrifice herself to her family, to her husband, to her children, will reduce expenses to what is strictly necessary, will make of herself an unpaid servant, and will bury her youth and beauty in order to economize the price of the education of her sons, the wife of a count or of a baron, sometimes no richer than the first, will exact of her pretty face the means of shining in the world, of eclipsing her rivals by her toilets, and

under the name of little presents will receive in reality the price of her honor. Frequent, then, if you can, these *bourgeois* interiors: you will see there the spectacle of a mother of a family worthy of all respect in spite of her pettiness and comicalities; and you can, if you succeed in overcoming that spirit of raillery which prompts young men to make sport of those whose habits and tastes are not in accord with their own—you can, I say, initiate yourself into the secrets of the life of Germany that is educated, laborious, sincerely convinced of the greatness of those who govern it; understanding nothing of the beauty of material things; unable to suspect the pleasure of being surrounded by objects which delight the sight or the senses; insensible to the beauty of a picture or a statue; careless of comfort, but capable of weeping at the reading of beautiful poetry, and of finding infinite enjoyment in seeing a plant flourish and prosper, and hoping to be able, as a relief after a day of calm, to run over the pages of a treatise of Darwin or peruse the last volume of Ranke. It is only the German of the middle class who reads. If you enter a public library, you will never find there anybody belonging to the highest ranks of society. The same

contrast exists between the officers of the elegant regiments of the guard and those belonging to the infantry and artillery. The first are grossly ignorant, of a self-sufficiency beyond belief; their days are passed at the club, or in walking the streets in order to gather there some *potins*; their nights are passed in dancing; they are almost more effeminate than the women, and in the majority of cases more vain. The second, on the contrary, are studious, modest, educated, but appreciated, alas! by people for whom worldly pleasures are a sealed book.

This explains to you why men occupying some sort of position, or worth something of themselves, keep aloof from the society which, as a young diplomat, you are obliged to frequent. Nowhere more than in Germany, and more than in Berlin, does there exist a greater difference between the classes which constitute the nation. Everywhere else a man of talent can rise out of the crowd, scatter prejudices, and by the single power of his genius make himself the equal of all. At Berlin he might make himself useful, even indispensable; he will never succeed in being accepted as an equal by those who in default of mind have ancestors, which is not exactly the same thing.

This barrier erected by pride has for result that the men who would be the best adapted to terminate successfully the work of the consolidation of the German Empire see themselves so driven back upon themselves that they do not even attempt to set aside the barriers which separate them from a world inferior in everything, but inaccessible to them.

It is at the entrance to this world, as to that of hell, that one must leave hope behind.

ARTISTS AND SAVANTS.

TWENTY-FIRST LETTER.

THERE are a great many artists and *savants* in Berlin, but they constitute among themselves a kind of *coterie* into which it is very difficult to penetrate. In general they are not met with in society, except at the house of the Princess Imperial or in the *salon* of the Countess de Schleinitz. The Princess Victoria, enthusiastic for everything which touches upon the domain of science, of literature and the arts, makes it a duty to encourage the *savants* and the artists. They are infinitely grateful to her for her intelligent protection. It is certain that since the marriage of the heir to the Throne things belonging to the artistic domain have made an immense progress. The Princess visits the expositions, criticises and judges them, interests herself in the acquisitions made by the museums, etc. A few rare persons in society imitate her example. The movement is still very restricted, but it is none the less a step made in advance in a new path.

Unfortunately the *grand monde* through its ignorance is incapable of acquiring a taste for the things of the mind, and consequently of directing artistic productions. The *bourgeoisie* has not sufficient authority as opposed to the artists; it allows itself to be imposed upon by them; in place of pointing out to them their faults or errors of taste, it accepts blindly and with enthusiasm the decrees which they pass upon themselves. The result of this state of things is that the artists, having the choice completely free, have founded a kind of national school, relying upon the traditions of the Renaissance, and which up to the present time has produced only monstrosities. Nothing equals the conceit of a German painter or sculptor, save perhaps that of an officer of the *gardes du corps*. They imagine they have conquered the domain of art, as much so as the German armies have conquered the provinces. Of an obstinacy without parallel in their ideas, they wish to impose their interpretations upon the entire universe.

Not having to do with an enlightened public, they can give a free development to their extravagances, and little by little succeed in corrupting entirely the taste of their compatriots. First of

all, what they condemn is the pleasure that one experiences in looking at a pretty object, even if its forms are not altogether correct, and they declaim against everything which simply pleases the eye. According to them everything ought to be in a certain style, the old-German style—*alt-deutsch*—which is nothing else than a frightful caricature of the Renaissance. It is thus that their houses are all gloomy, black, horribly furnished with seats and *armoires* in carved wood, their walls ornamented with pictures of the new school; that is to say, representing women in entravagant *poses*, with faded bouquets in their hands.

But I perceive that I am losing sight of my subject, and am launching out into a digression upon German taste instead of speaking to you simply of the artists. I come back then to my text, and describe to you the Professor Angeli. Professor Angeli is from Vienna, and has nothing to do here; but he comes so often to Berlin, he is so much patronized by the aristocratic society of the city, that one might almost count him in the number of its children. His great vogue dates from the time when he made the portrait of the Prince and Princess Imperial, who have moreover bought his best works. Since this success, Pro-

fessor Angeli has been the Benjamin of all the *salons*, and like all Benjamins he has abused his position. He is a man the most penetrated with his own value of any man in the world. His pride reaches phenomenal proportions; he thinks the entire universe created for his personal use. He is responsible for his acts, for he can, on occasion when he is in presence of people not disposed to tolerate this pride, be relatively modest. Unfortunately that scarcely ever happens, and the elegant ladies of Berlin submit blindly to the caprices of Professor Angeli, which would not be tolerated an instant in an *attaché* or a secretary of an embassy.

Professor Werner, whose picture of Congress has had such a success, as well as that of the Proclamation of the Empire at Versailles, is a little, thin, slender man, with a cunning expression, but who at least is not aggressive. That is not saying that he has a small opinion of himself, but he is not vain as the majority of his *confrères*, and especially as the painter Lenbach, for example, whose head has been completely turned by two or three *bonnes fortunes* with some wholly or partially insane women.

The Count Ferdinand Harrach himself is a gen-

tleman-artist, an amateur painter, working for the love of art, which does not prevent him from exacting very high prices for quite detestable pictures. Not so handsome as Mars, he has yet made conquests, among others that of his very pretty wife. A man of intelligence, he is, notwithstanding, so convinced of his superiority that he does not disdain even to concede a little common-sense to his neighbor. He is very amiable; but one divines, simply from his cunning smile, how little esteem he has for those whom he deigns to honor with his attention. He is one of the most zealous apostles of the style *alt-deutsch*. The Princess Royal finds without doubt that it is better to be deceived in art than not to cultivate it, and it seems to her probable that the Count Ferdinand Harrach sets at least a good example; she honors him with her especial good graces, and has even deigned to choose him for her cavalier in her *bal costume*.

The most remarkable, in point of intellect, among the artists whom you will have occasion to meet is, without dispute, the Professor Gustave Richter, the first portrait-painter whom Germany possesses to-day. This one has neither arrogance nor false ostentation. He knows his value, but

has not the pretension of surpassing the rest of humanity by his talent or his genius. He is the only German artist that can be classed in the category of superior men; he married a daughter of Meyerbeer, and the wife as well as the husband are deserving that you should attach yourself to them, and that you should not neglect the opportunity to visit them.

I will not speak to you of the other painters or sculptors who dispute with each other the good graces of Berlin; it suffices that I have pointed out to you the principal ones, among whom I was almost forgetting to mention the sculptor Begas, a man of much talent, and whose wife is celebrated for her beauty.

The *fêtes* which the artistic world of Berlin gives are amusing for whomsoever desires to be edified by human vanity, for nothing is comparable to the contempt with which the German artists speak of those who do not share their ideas or their tastes.

As to the *savants* and *littérateurs*, there are some remarkable ones in Berlin. Without speaking to you of Mommsen, of Ranke, of Helmholtz, almost all the professors of the University are people of the greatest merit and of the highest

worth, who labor for the sake of labor, to advance the cause of science, or to clear up the still dark points of history ; not for the triumph of their theories or of their personal opinions. These courageous pioneers of progress merit our most thorough respect and sincerest admiration, for they are the only ones of their country who are not blinded by false ideas of national glory, who admit the worth of all the peoples of the earth, and who above the new German Empire, its armies, its conquests, its sovereign, and its all-powerful Minister, see something more grand, more noble still for them, and more sublime, for it is the only one here below that the Eternal has created in his image—humanity.

THE PRESS AND THE JOURNALS.

TWENTY-SECOND LETTER.

GERMANY is one of the countries where the press plays a rôle disproportioned to the influence it exercises. Among the quantity of daily papers which flood the pavement of Berlin, scarcely two or more than three can be found which exercise a certain power over the mind of the masses, and even they are of a quite inferior order; as, for example, the *Klein Journal*, a pitiful imitation of the *Petit Journal*, and the *Tageblatt* of Berlin, which must not be confounded with the *Deutsch Tageblatt*. These two gazettes are the organs of German humbug and of Jewish arrogance. They are read everywhere by the servants and by the *grand monde*, who equally discover in them something to satisfy their love for sensational news.

It often happens that these sheets are obliged to retract their own affirmations; but the public rarely reads the retraction, and circulates on the contrary with pleasure stories always false. As

to the journals, they are especially read abroad, where one has the *naiveté* to believe that they represent the opinion for which they combat. There is nothing of the kind, however, save two or three sheets in the style of the *Germania*, the organ of the Clericals, and the *Kreuz Zeitung*, the mouthpiece of the Conservatives.

The German press is entirely either in the hands of the Jewish bankers or dependent on the government, which inspires in turn the *Post*, the *Nord-deutsche* and the *National Zeitung*, and even sometimes the *Gazette de Cologne*, according as the choice of one or the other of these sheets appears to it favorable to its interests, and according as it appears to it that one or the other will allow itself the most easily to be contradicted. In questions regarding the press, the same as in all others, the Prince de Bismarck has his plan. When he wishes to be edified upon the effect which some news or other may produce on the world, he has it immediately printed, taking good care to accentuate it after the so-called shade of the organ chosen by him. After the whole of Europe has been excited and agitated by it, and the foreign press has taken it up with more or less noise, and the result wished for by the Chan-

cellor is obtained, he has it contradicted by an official note of the *Norddeutsche*. And the good soul then criticises audaciously the perversity of those who dare to suspect an independent journal of having intimate relations with the government.

The *Norddeutsche Allgemeine Zeitung*, or North-German Gazette, is the only sheet which the Minister of Foreign Affairs continually feeds. Yet it denies it every moment. When the ambassador of a foreign power comes to complain at the Wilhelmstrasse of an article particularly venomous against his country, they immediately make him a thousand excuses for it, while all the time alleging their ignorance of the said article, and they promise to address to the guilty party a reprimand; then the next day, without denying the affirmations of the previous day, the *Norddeutsche* publishes an *entrefilet* designed to appease the wrath excited by it. Besides, this journal serves as diapason for all the others, which regulate their tone by it and rarely dispute its assertions.

The editors are only there for form's sake. All the political articles are well and nicely fabricated at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and submitted,

at least as to the principal ones, to the preliminary examination of the Chancellor.

When M. de Bismarck has need to have introduced into a certain quarter an opinion which would not be in its place in the *Norddeutsche*, and which would not have sufficient authority in one of his other organs, he chooses the *Post*, a so-called honest, conservative, and independent journal of the integrity of whose principles many *bourgeois* are convinced. The aid of the *Post* is especially invoked when the Chancellor wishes to conciliate the sympathies of the *grand seigneurs püttistes*, subscribers to the *Gazette de la Croix*, and of that sacred world which has constantly before its eyes the nightmare of social revolution.

The assertions of the *Post* are more rarely contradicted than those of any other journal. It is the olive-branch to reconcile, when that becomes necessary, the government with the adherents of the party of the Cross.

As to the *National Zeitung*, the organ of Lasker and of the National Liberals, it formerly vigorously sustained the government in its contest against the Catholics. Since the party which it represents has fallen out with the Chancellor, the *National Zeitung* has appeared equally em-

broiled with him. But this sheet has still leanings towards its ancient ally when it becomes a question of combating the common enemy, clericalism; and the Chancellor makes use of it without scruple when he wishes to conciliate the enemies of the party of M. de Windthorst.

The *Journal*, considered as being unfavorably regarded in high places, could without danger be contradicted and even censured if the sudden change of tactics of M. de Bismarck should render the contradiction and censure necessary.

As to the *Gazette de Cologne*, it is the advanced sentinel of the Chancellor. It is charged especially to observe the foreign powers, to unveil their ambitious projects, to expose their dissensions, the embarrassment of their finances, and the so-called strength of their armies. It is the *Gazette*, also, which has for special mission to arouse the German patriotism, awaken the national pride, and give the last clarion signal for the hour of battle.

Published outside of Berlin, passing for the best-informed sheet of Germany, as it is one of the richest, keeping everywhere correspondents sending more or less fantastic stories, the *Gazette de Cologne* is reputed abroad to be an independent

journal, although passionate in its opinions and of extreme violence in its hatreds.

Few people suspect that its information comes to it in a straight line from the cabinet of M. de Bismarck, who takes advantage of the high position occupied by this journal to excite the bad feelings of its compatriots, irritate the foreign press, provoke its wrath and then reproach it for it.

Thus, as one sees, the Prince de Bismarck has everywhere and always many strings to his bow, and plays with the press as with everything else.

He manages in the same way the foreign correspondents, who say, speak, and send only what pleases the Chancellor: those who are corrupt obey, those who are independent are circumvented, those who are hostile are deceived. M. de Bismarck knows also how to reduce the foreign correspondents by a sort of hunger which chases them out of the truth, as the wolves out of the woods. Then having nothing to put their pens to, they manufacture, like the Russian journalists, improbable news, or, like the *Times*, they are reduced to counting the balls and the dinners of Lord Ampthill.

Among the journals really free from all species

of connection and compromise with the government, two only merit special mention, the *Kreuz Zeitung*, or *Gazette de la Croix*, and the *Germania*. The first is patronized by the *société élégante*, which finds in it very minute descriptions of all the *fêtes* of the Court, and which announces its births, marriages, and deaths. The fact of being a subscriber to the *Kreuz Zeitung* constitutes of itself alone a patent of respectability. It is an arch-honest, an arch-Protestant and arch-tiresome sheet. Its saint is Luther, its hero is the Pastor Kögel, its enemies are those for whom the word *progress* is not an abominable word. A hundred years behindhand, the *Kreuz Zeitung* was formerly liked by M. de Bismarck. It pushes its scruples, as to the veracity of the news which it gives, so far as to publish them only when they have received the consecration of time and have passed into the domain of ancient history.

It is perpetually at war with the *Germania*, the Catholicism of which it holds in abomination. This latter sheet, more Catholic than the Pope, distinguishes itself especially by its passionate ardor for all sorts of polemics and by the asperity it brings into all kinds of discussions. Tact is a quality which is wholly unknown to it, and Chris-

tian gentleness is entirely foreign to it. "Religion without charity," ought to be its motto.

I will not speak to you of the *Fremdenblatt*, a journal almost entirely devoted to stupid gossip. It shares with the *Berliner Tageblatt*, of which I have already said a word, the favors of the officers and the ladies of Berlin, who will both find there after a ball the description of their toilettes and the names of their *danseuses*. In general all the papers devoted to the recital of the miscellaneous news and scandals of the *grande monde*, enjoy an immense vogue in elegant society. The journalists who are its owners profit by this state of things either to increase the number of their subscribers by serving up to them every morning a fresh bit of gossip, or to extract money from the dupes whom they threaten to compromise by the disclosure of certain incidents of their private life.

This kind of blackmail gave occasion, not long since, to a scandalous suit in which figured an ex-officer, the bearer of an aristocratic name and allied to the best families of the country. But for once that the thing has been exposed, how great is the number of victims who have submitted to their fate without complaining, and who have paid

dearly for a silence which they judged indispensable to their social position !

The journal perhaps the most read in Berlin, among those of this category, is the *Boersen Courier* (Courier of the Bourse). The organ of the theatre and of the stockjobbers, it is a sheet whose editors are continually in prison. One reads there narrations at one time bitterly true, at another cruelly false. The opinions of this journal are of no value on any other subject than that of money.

THE DUPES OF THE CHANCELLOR.

TWENTY-THIRD LETTER.

I MUST not forget to speak to you of a certain class of individuals, some examples of whom you will have occasion to meet, and whom I can characterize only by the name of the crows of the Chancellor, in recollection of our friend La Fontaine. They are people more or less intelligent, always pliable and adroit, often insinuating, whose manners and education leave nothing to be desired, and who, devoured by an unbounded ambition, have made themselves the slaves of the Prince de Bismarck, to whom they serve, often without suspecting it, as—what shall I say? *Spies* is a term too energetic; *infamous* is weak; let us say, then, that they are people who by devotion to their own person have imposed upon themselves the task of dissipating the sleeplessness of their powerful protector by means of stories upon the events of the day, and upon the actions and doings of different persons whose political opinions are feared in high places.

Without having the taste for those fairy-tales

like the Sultan in the "Thousand and One Nights," the Chancellor loves to be distracted by anecdotes. He loves still more to possess some lost souls not avowed as such; his scent of a true-bred hunter enables him soon to discover them, and he immediately sets about attracting them to him, persuading them that they have spirit, talents—all sorts of good qualities, in fine; and, a thing more important, giving them the assurance that they enjoy his entire confidence. In a word, it happens that M. de Bismarck makes himself a fox to seduce some little crows, to whom he gives cheese in place of taking it from them.

It is rare that this cheese is of the best quality; but a humble *gruyère* eaten in company of a prince is often preferable to a slice of Cheshire devoured in solitude. Starting from this principle, many persons make desperate efforts to obtain a bit of the first; but, alas! this bit resembles the fatal fruit of the tree of good and evil. It makes you lose your head. Once that you have tasted it, one belongs no longer to himself; one becomes ambitious, cruel, cowardly; one sacrifices everything, honor, feelings, to the desire of being in the greatest favor, to the pride of being approved by the master who owns you.

The compacts concluded between M. de Bismarck and the auxiliaries of whom he makes use secretly are never anything else than merely understood; often even the persons who have signed them are in ignorance of the engagement which binds them. They know only that the Chancellor finds them of value; that he invites them to Varzin; that he admits them into his intimacy; makes them converse; interests himself in their views; that, in fine, for one reason or another their career takes an extraordinary flight and develops itself in a manner particularly favorable to their interests. They ignore, these honest people, or feign to ignore, the influence of the particular beneficent genius to whom they owe their rapid advancement; but at each new proof of the favors which Providence accords them they go and make a visit to the Chancellor, who receives them with open arms, congratulates them, and repeats to them: "I am very happy that they appreciate at last a man of your merit."

Among the individuals thus appreciated, two or three are in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs; others, military or civil, wander about in society, where they are admirably received, and where few people suspect the *rôle* which they are playing.

You yourself, fully apprised as you may be, will have a great deal of difficulty to distinguish them, and the greater part of the time you will fall into the trap laid for you by their amiability, always exquisite, and their politeness, superior by far to that of Germans in general.

However, the presence of these living telephones constitutes none the less a serious danger of existence in Berlin; for the slightest sincere word escaped in confidence may perhaps be repeated to the one criticised, and assume by the very fact that it is repeated an importance that was not intended. Do not talk, then, of politics during your stay in Berlin; or if you do so, praise everybody and everything, even and especially what you disapprove.

Strive to avoid every hazardous expression; confine yourself to the most vulgar commonplaces; recollect that not only the walls but even the air has ears; and that, in our age of progress, one can, by the aid of telephones, hear at Potsdam what is said at Berlin. I will not cite to you the names of the persons who appear to have entered into the category which I have just described. To what good to unvail their incognito? To what good especially to take from them their

illusions?—to tell them that it is not their merit but their usefulness to which they owe the protection of the Chancellor, and that there will arrive a moment when, this being no longer necessary, they will fall back into obscurity, from which a mind less adroit than that of M. de Bismarck would never have striven to draw them? Only I will repeat to you again and always: Be on your guard, be on your guard; be still more so with young men who speak very well all languages; who have travelled much, and possess a certain quantity of foreign decorations; are polite with the diplomats (that is a grave sign), very attentive to the ladies, well received at Court, sought for in society, and going but little to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Besides these unavowed gentlemen, the Chancellor has still other *protégés*—these avowed and perfectly avowable. Such is, for example, M. Lindau, brother of Paul Lindau the writer, whom you must have already met. He has a fine head, having all the distinctive characteristics of the Jewish race—energy, shrewdness, a mind well tempered, a judgment sound and strong, an extreme facility in the management of his pen, and an ambition to rise by the aid of his own merits.

Very well received by the Princess Imperial, M. Rudolph Lindau merits the sympathies accorded him by the heiress to the throne. He is one of the best *employés* of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and has succeeded until now in avoiding the disgrace of the *deus ex machina* of his department. He is seen but little in society, where he is received with a certain disdain on account of his Israelitish origin. A charming talker, you will find him nevertheless much more reserved than when abroad, for in Berlin everybody fears a false interpretation of their thoughts. I doubt for this very reason that he will encourage you to visit him; however, it will be for you a useful and profitable acquaintance. Do not count, however, upon his being able to furnish you with any information: he is of an extreme avarice upon this point. I regret much on your account the absence from Berlin of M. de Radowitz. He is one of the most curious types that I know. Shrewd, adroit, pliant, intellectual, knowing how to adapt himself to all situations, to lie with imperturbable coolness when necessary, to flatter opportunely, contradict in time, approve when there is occasion, he has, with all his good qualities, a fault—that of an impetuosity of character

sometimes dangerous for a diplomat, for it could carry him beyond his object, and in any case create a fear in his employer's mind that he would not execute to the letter and in the same spirit the instructions which he received. He is, besides, vain, and does not know how to repress an *amour-propre* too accessible to flattery. He surrenders easily his secret to those who know how to praise him judiciously for being its depositary. Very passionate in his enthusiasm for the Chancellor, very zealous for his profession, he allows himself to be drawn sometimes into lapses of tact, and forgets that, if Germany has the right to be proud, its representatives are in duty bound not to be insolent. Such as he is, however, one can consider M. de Radowitz, if not as one of the best, as one of the most skilful and most amiable diplomatic agents which Prussia possesses. He is reproached often among his colleagues with being a blunderer, but in certain cases that might be a good trait, and it is often a fortunate thing, in the changing and brusque policy pursued by M. de Bismarck, to have a representative that may be disavowed.

Often, when one seeks for or desires a war, people capable of provoking it, like M. de Rado-

witz, become precious auxiliaries. As to the present, he is at Constantinople, to replace the Count Paul de Hatzfeldt, and probably also to annoy Russia, and grate upon the nerves of its *chargé d'affaires*, M. de Nélidoff, who, they say, is extremely susceptible.

I do not know how M. de Radowitz supports his retirement upon the banks of the Bosphorus; but what I am sure of is, that he finds himself in his element in the midst of intrigues of all sorts in which Oriental politics move and the unfortunate Commander of the Faithful struggles.

To set people by the ears, to reconcile them afterwards, to have one's hands kissed by friends and enemies, is a trade which suits under all aspects the sons of the Radowitz, the friend of the mystic Frederick William IV., whom Saint René Taillandier has so well depicted for us in his fine book, "Ten Years of the German Empire."

I will only mention in passing, among the *protégés* of the Prince de Bismarck, M. de Busch, the author of the famous work upon the Chancellor which made so much noise two or three years ago. This one is a friend whom one disavows; whom one allows to act, as it were, because it cannot be prevented; whom one disapproves and

blames for the *inconvenience* of his revelations. One must know the Chancellor very little, and take very badly into account the power of which he disposes, to admit for a single moment that M. de Busch would have dared to publish his book without having preliminarily submitted the integral text to M. de Bismarck, and obtained from him the necessary permission.

The Prince likes quite well this kind of indiscretion, which permits him to make known indirectly to the public the hidden phases of his character, as well as certain opinions that he could not express elsewhere than in intimate social intercourse. The publication of the work *Fürst Bismarck und seine Leute* was a species of recompense accorded by the Chancellor to a man who had been useful to him, and to whom he had granted, in the guise of a salary, the right to describe his daily habits. M. de Bismarck understands too well the people governed by Cæsarism not to know that they must be amused either by giving them, under some form or other, bread and games, or by offering to their curious avidity the spectacle of the private life of a great man.

I recapitulate. In order to understand Germany well and observe it with profit, one must

study it, comprehend it, and judge it at that moment of its history in which it seems to have assimilated its conquests, and in which a near future may direct it in new paths.

One asks one's self in effect, to-day, what will happen when the old Emperor, his all-powerful Minister, the Moltkes, the Manteuffels, those men of another age fallen upon the full nineteenth century, shall have disappeared; when in their place will be found a king who has been able, without his contributing to it, to try the experiment of a military and absolute government, but to whom his situation, his leisure, his labors, his travels, the nationality even of his wife, and, they say, of her tastes, have given quite a different character, and perhaps the determination to govern Germany in a liberal sense. What obstacles will he find in the traditions of a system which has made Germany imperial? what resistance in an army organized for conquest? in a *bourgeoisie* not yet qualified to assume power? in a demoralized press? in disorganized parties? What aid could be brought him by ambitious personalities incapable of assuming responsibilities to which they have been for so long a time unaccustomed? Through all these so unfavorable elements, the

socialism of which M. de Bismarck has enlarged the spring, and which he is himself powerless to dam up, threatens to rise higher every day. Then one can predict that the situation of the successor of an Emperor constantly victorious will be difficult and perhaps inextricable. Could he find in the army itself the spirit of sacrifice which would permit him to reduce it? Would he find in the public functionaries, disused to submission, the necessary instruction which great reforms require? Is the same generation which has seen everywhere the triumph of material force, with its injustices and hostilities, made to precipitate itself with ardor in the open paths of moral force and justice?

To direct into such paths a nation so little prepared to follow them is needed a prince of a bold spirit and generous aspirations, a firm hand, indifferent to temporary popularity, but knowing that history can give in its assizes, at the side of a conqueror, an equal place to a great legislator.

THE END.

THE VIRTUAL AUTHORESS OF THE STRICTURE ON BERLIN SOCIETY.

Wife, Maiden and Widow—Her Pilgrimage Through Europe—"Nights and Suppers of the Gods" in Her Paris Salon.

PARIS, Feb. 20.—The scandal created by the appearance of Marie Colombier's "Sarah Barnum" has been superseded by another somewhat more disreputable still—the publication of a work entitled "Societe a Berlin," in which the foibles, frivolities and secret intrigues of life in the German capital are grossly exaggerated in order to pander to the rather questionable tastes of those who have no other reason for their bitter hate of Germany than a resolve never to forgive the superiority of German generalship to French in the campaign of 1870-71. This diatribe on society beyond the Rhine, although interdicted by the French Government, finds its way, nevertheless, into this capital, as Rochefort's *Lanterne* did fifteen years ago in the teeth of Napoleon's vigilant *mouchards*. People in general and the French in particular have a strong relish for forbidden fruit. A Parisian of *bon ton* would give a louis for a copy of a suppressed journal, while the same broad sheet, if "left severely alone" by the authorities, would not, in his eyes, be worth one solitary centime. Owing partly to this official prohibition, the sale of "Societe a Berlin" is brisk in boudoir and in salon where the gay French aristocrats buy up its stinging satires and spicy revelations on German morality and chuckle in quiet delight over the "mighty anger" which is reported to have overwhelmed Bismarck himself on the occasion of its publication. Several Paris journals have justly protested against this new method of avenging past wrongs and doubt if it will in the slightest way assist in the recovery of the lost provinces. "Afraid to fling down the gauntlet to Germany on the battlefield," said a French politician to me the other day, "we seem to think that the last resort left us to crush her is by pelting vain vituperation on the habits and customs of her capital's "upper ten." The relish, however, with which this notorious whim has been received by all parties in France—despite the remonstrances of several cool-headed and sensible French journalists—proves that Germany is hated by her neighbors as keenly and unforgivingly as ever.

THE ANTI-PRUSSIAN "CRUSADE."

The two more prominent leaders in the anti-Prussian "crusade" are M. Paul Deralonlede and Mme. Adam. The former appeals to the ignorant classes and is looked upon as a brawler, as his injudicious invasion of a



